PREDICTIVE TEXT
The future of narrative fiction

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DECLARATION

This thesis, titled 'Predictive Text: The future of narrative fiction', is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I certify that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted for the requirements of a higher degree to any other university or educational institution.

In addition, I certify that all literature and sources of information used have been appropriately referenced and acknowledged in the thesis.

Signed:

………………………………………………………………….

Don Sillence, 31/12/2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the current state and future prospects of the historical formation commonly known as 'the novel', a particular expression of literature that formed around, and was fuelled by, a certain experience of literacy. Given that the concept of literature as a category is tendentious and intricately interrelated with other forms of media and diverse cultural practices, a broader category of 'narrative fiction' needs to be imposed. Predictably, the traditional novel then appears archaic and subsumed.

From the point of view of an imagined future, this contention is key to understanding ongoing developments in literary representation. At the same time, it is notably irrelevant without an accompanying argument about the future of literacy. This thesis therefore posits both: that to understand the future of literature it is necessary to ask questions about the future of literacy, and vice-versa. As an organising principle, these questions are explored through three mostly separate or separated approaches to predictive knowledge about the future, presented as speculative, prospective and theoretical.

The first, speculative, takes its arguments from the novel, spiralling outwards from otherwise straightforward questions such as 'how?', 'why?' and 'what if…?' In doing so, it moves from a historical view to a technological one, then to more fictional aspects and finally to an assemblage, a superposition, where potential outcomes are put together and summed up. The second, prospective approach endeavours to measure the size and shape of the issue, concerning itself with reading, literacy and publishing statistics. Drawing on these multiple avenues of inquiry, the thesis thus illustrates certain fundamental problems that the future must face. The final section, theoretical, draws conclusions from its interrogation of longstanding theoretical critiques: critical literacy, commitment and antinomy. These, in contrast, reduce the scope of what must be considered, allowing the thesis to reach some kind of determination.

This unconventional approach is balanced, it is hoped, by its respectful recognition of an extensive tradition of similar questions being posed in different ways. What is novel about this thesis is that it seeks to provide synoptic answers to these questions at a moment in history, after the development of the internet, when a technological shift is likely to provide not only a new context for those answers but an intensified transcultural urgency to our human need to represent, communicate and connect.

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This thesis could not have been written without the help of my family and friends, particularly my partner, Chloe, my brother, Tom, my parents, David and Jennifer, and my friend and fellow academic, Craig. From each according to the best of their ability, to each according to their great patience and fortitude. I climbed the mountain but you all walked with me.

I'd also like to especially thank my supervisor, Paul Sheehan, who took the long odds.

This thesis is dedicated to my children – Orlando, Fox, Galileo and Oz – who are my life, who are learning to read and tell their own stories, and to the honour of the memory of Herbert Richard Hoggart (1918-2014), Stuart McPhail Hall (1932-2014), Michael Stern Hart (1947-2011) and Aaron Hillel Swartz (1986-2013).

A NOTE ON FUTURE RESEARCH

It is not within the remit of this thesis to question the influence of the internet (digital technology) on the shaping of our collective 'contemporary' intellect or as a functioning tool for research or scholarship ('the internet wide and a click deep'), and yet I feel remiss in ignoring the parallel line of inquiry to my own question on ebooks and literacy. Suffice to say that for this thesis I read as many 'full-text' books online or digitally (PDF, web page) as I did on paper: we are still cresting the 'new media' wave but it has not broken.

Likewise, while the 'new' technology may have offered me 'new' thoughts (new to me, anyway), it has not yet obviously resolved into a new structure or vocabulary (not just new practices or uses, but new 'hypertext' modes of thought and expression) – as Marshall McLuhan finds suggestive of Descartes after Gutenberg's mechanical age, or of Heidegger after Marconi's 'electronic' era, in his seminal if, at times, idiosyncratic masterpiece *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making Of Typographic Man* (1962: 248-250).[1]

Alan Galey writes in 'The Human Presence in Digital Artefacts':

> By contrast, book history is just that: history. It looks back to how things were, even in the very recent past, and how they came to be as they are. To those ends, its chief products are narratives in the form of scholarly books and articles. Increasingly though, the term history of the book is expanding into history and future of the book, generally a positive development but by no means a straightforward one, since the future is not available for study in the same way as the past. The digital humanities' most productive response to this difficulty has been to ask 'why speculate when we can prototype?'; that is, to regard the future of the book as something we create, not just observe and comment upon. (McCarty (ed.), 2010: 108)

I have mostly left such projects to others and to the future. Any success of my undertaking here is, at best, a mixed benediction of the technologies used to compose and compile it.

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INTRODUCTION: 'A BOOK BY ANY OTHER NAME'

> Tina Brown: You said in an interview that you don't think novels are going to be read 25 years from now. Were you being provocative or do you believe that to be true?
>
> Philip Roth: I was being optimistic about 25 years, really. No, I think it's going to be cultic. I think always people will be reading them, but it'll be a small group of people – maybe more people than now read Latin poetry, but somewhere in that range.
>
> Tina Brown: Is there anything you think that novelists can do about that or do you think that it's just that the narrative form is going to die out? It's just the length of them or what? Is that what's dictating you writing shorter books now?
>
> Philip Roth: It's the print. That's the problem. It's the book. It's the object itself. To read a novel requires a certain kind of concentration, focus, devotion to the reading. [...]
>
> Tina Brown: Do you feel that the Kindle is not going to be that? [...] And a lot of people I speak [...with] have Kindles [...and they] tell me they read more on Kindle than they did on hard copy.
>
> Philip Roth: Maybe. I'm not familiar with the Kindle. [...] I don't think the Kindle will make any difference to what I'm talking about, which is that the book can't compete with the screen. It couldn't compete beginning with the movie screen. It couldn't compete with the television screen and it can't compete with the computer screen I don't think. And now we have all those screens so against all those screens I think the book can't measure up. I may be wrong.
>
> **Tina Brown and Philip Roth, *The Daily Beast* (30/10/2009)**

> Tina Brown: Now Philip Roth, when I spoke to him a few months back, he told me that he thought in 25 years the novel would be gone, that he's very pessimistic about the future of the novel. Do you share his pessimism?
>
> Ian McEwan: Après moi, le deluge. Well, he's done everything to keep the novel as a vibrant form, so…
>
> Tina Brown: He says the competition is screens. He says screens will win.
>
> Ian McEwan: I think the medium carrying the message might change. But I think we will still need to examine the fine print of human behavior, human relationships. So whether people are reading it on an iPad or an old-fashioned book doesn't seem to be the real issue. We've invented this rather interesting means of looking at ourselves and trying to learn what it's like to be someone else, and I think the novel, I think it'll hang on in there, is my guess. You can't, with a movie or any kind of TV drama, quite get that inside quality. So it might become [...] a minority pursuit, but it's always been that.
>
> **Tina Brown and Ian McEwan, *The Daily Beast* (15/04/2010)[2]**

In May, 2011, Amazon announced that its ebook sales had exceeded all of its print sales and this widely considered trend has, since then, reignited the perennial debate over whether the book, as we knew it, is dead (Adams, 2011). Aside from the economic concerns of global markets in a state of flux, seemingly still struggling with online culture, the spectre of media piracy and general fear of the unknown, this idea is itself subject to a host of anxieties, particularly the relationship between literature and literacy, and, when you break that down, why people continue to tell stories and how, or in what ways, are they meaningful. Unlike other media – such as radio, film, television, computer games – ebooks and the panoply of digital narratives most obviously inscribe a direct transition from a prior form, the literal, material reading of a paper-and-ink book. However, very

much like those 'new' narrative vehicles of the 20th century, there is little statistical evidence at this point that digital narrative will erase its material predecessor. Amazon actually reported a rise in its printed book sales in 2011 but whether it was merely a facet of market share or even whether this will continue in years to come (Shepherd, 2011; Savitz, 2011; Milliot, 2013) is arguably less significant than the effect that the changing technology might eventually have, not just on how we read books – in what state and with the advantages and limitations of such technology – but also what they're about.

A historical analysis of the novel (as we think we know it) suggests that available technology delivers not only the medium by which we experience narrative fiction but also, to an extent, defines the content. This is not strictly determinative but is nonetheless broadly applicable (Ong and Hartley, 2015).[3] Charles Dickens' serialised fiction is a notable example, the form of weekly or monthly periodicals permitting reader feedback, if sometimes only in the mere augury of sales figures, as led him to send the titular character in *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* to America (Lodge, 2002: 118). In short, if not exactly causal, there's a distinctly more-than-casual relationship between novel form and novel content.[4]

Furthermore, while narrativity or storytelling is thought to be a fundamental human behaviour, practice, or even a sort of technology, predating the book,[5] it is significant that it is still a matter for debate what other, ancient forms of narrative can be linked with the narrative of novels (Moore, 2010: 40, passim). Contemporary understandings of what constitutes a book or novel certainly seem broader than ever; though partly, presumably, because the information technologies of prior centuries were so assiduously reprinted in book format. Umberto Eco in his dialogue with Jean-Claude Carrière on the future of the book (published as *This Is Not The End Of The Book*) argues:

> One of two things will happen: either the book will continue to be the medium for reading, or its replacement will resemble what the book has always been, even before the invention of the printing press. Alterations to the book-as-object have modified neither its function nor its grammar for more than 500 years. The book is like the spoon, scissors, hammer, the wheel. Once invented, it cannot be improved. […] Perhaps it will evolve in terms of components; perhaps the pages will no longer be made of paper. But it will still be the same thing. (Carrière and Eco, et al., 2012: 4-5)

Ursula Le Guin in her essay on the rise of ereading, 'Riding the Avalanche', says something similar:

> I don't think print on paper will vanish any more than the pencil vanished when we started typing. The physical document is irreplaceably useful and

durable. To think electronic storage can replace it is mere techno-hubris. But it looks as if, within a few years, most popular and ephemeral works, maybe most books of all kinds, will be published electronically and not on paper. […] We are an adaptable species, and habit changes everything. (Le Guin, 2012)

Eco's argument – put simply, names change, things stay relatively the same – is commonsensically convincing but questions arise: if it wasn't the same thing, or not quite, would we still call it a book? And if it was called something else, would we who remember books still think of it as a book, or a kind of book? After all, there's a difference between a sledgehammer and a jackhammer – technological innovation is a notorious modifier of how words function. How much would ebooks or a successive technology have to change the way we read, what we read and why, for us to consider paper books as distant, even, as scrolls or codices? As Le Guin says, habit changes everything – and we are quick to forget. The novel is a useful case study for us, then. While books are commonly understood to have a very long history, the novel and its immediate precursors were widely thought, until relatively recently, to be far more modern; crucially, however, ongoing scholarship has challenged that presupposition – in particular, Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story Of The Novel* (1996), Franco Moretti's edition of two volumes of essays entitled *The Novel* (the English translation distils the original five-volume Italian set into two: *History, Geography and Culture* and *Forms and Themes*, both 2006) and Steven Moore's *The Novel – An Alternative History* (2010) excavate a far greater history of the novel prior to the 18th century.

In the same way that previous histories of the novel, such as Ian Watt's canonical *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) or Michael McKeon's monumental *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987)[6], can be said to have reinforced a prevalent national mythology (simply put, the Western history of the novel's development is predictably European etc.)[7], contemporary re-readings, as it were, of the history of the novel demonstrate our own era's ardent determination to embrace cross-cultural and trans-historical connections. This is neither cynical nor unfair to Watt or McKeon (or Doody or Moore, et al.) but is understandable, apropos, and arguably unavoidable. It is important to historicise our histories, even as we recognise that all efforts to interpret history are an open invitation to subsequent – and necessary – historical debate.[8] One immediate lesson we can draw from the newfound 'long history of the novel' is caution towards any presumption of a causal / linear / narrative history of narrative (that one thing follows another by design, or that all change is evolution, post hoc); while cultural factors can be isolated, trends identified and conclusions drawn about narrative technology, this reading of the future history of novels goes deeper than skimming but may still fall short of the whole story. Discussing the earliest examples of literary fiction ('perhaps of the novel itself'), tales from the Middle Kingdom (1990-1800 BCE), Moore remarks:

In the 19th century [CE], when Egyptian and Akkadian literature[9] was rediscovered and deciphered, the novel was still considered an upstart, lowbrow form by many, and prose a medium more suitable to newspapers than to literature. (Moore, 2010: 38)

This insight[10] reflects our uncertain footing: on the one hand, the history of the novel is the modern history of its popularisation (the confluence of technological development and social change) but it could also be, on the other, a history of its survival, virtually unknown and unacknowledged for hundreds upon thousands of years – effectively a dead technology resurrected, or reborn. In this way, while the 'death' of a centuries-old form of expression seems vaguely ridiculous, it is nonetheless conceivable that digital technology and ebooks may yet bring about 'the death of the novel', as we've known it; or indeed give it new life.

*   *   *

It is worth clarifying from the outset that we don't appear to be imminently 'post-novel' in a historical sense. It is, however, in keeping with the poststructuralist insight that social fictions are self-actualising that we can see how concern over the death of the novel, or the death of the book, nonetheless represents an apprehension in search of analysis. Or, as John Barth puts it in 'The Literature of Exhaustion': "Whether historically the novel expires or persists as a major art form seems immaterial to me; if enough writers and critics feel apocalyptical about it, their feeling becomes a considerable cultural fact […]." (Barth, 1984: 72) Barth's articulation of the problem – that "the novel's time as a major art form is up, as the 'times' of classical tragedy, Italian and German grand opera, or the sonnet-sequence came to be" (ibid.: 71) – appears to provide its own answer, though, as per Eco, Le Guin and McEwan: the form of the novel might change but it survives as long as its function continues.

These feelings are, it can be deduced, periodic but palpable, if not necessarily an accurate barometer. This is why we should approach with caution the otherwise invigorating theory of a 'Gutenberg Parenthesis' – that the time before Gutenberg (before printing) and the present-extending-into-the-future (the time after the advent of the internet) reflect on each other – as outlined by the work of the University of Southern Denmark's Gutenberg Parenthesis Research Forum and espoused by academics like Tom Pettitt. In his paper 'Before The Gutenberg Parenthesis: Elizabethan-American Compatibilities', Pettitt truncates the thesis as follows:

If 'parenthetical' culture is dominated by the original, individual, autonomous, stable and canonical composition, then pre-parenthetical culture is rather dominated by the opposites of these qualities: the re-creative, collective, con-

textual, unstable, traditional performance, which […] may be another way of formulating the 'sampling, remixing, borrowing, reshaping, appropriating and recontextualizing' characteristic of 'post-parenthetic', digital internet culture. (Pettitt, 2007a: 2; see also Pettitt, 2007b)

A longer version is provided by the Forum's position paper, which takes its model of a future text from the communal and discursive and editable and updatable qualities of the web ('the blog, wiki etc.', as they put it): "It is a development with significant consequences for our approach to the world. It is a development which, by changing the material conditions for cognition, changes the form and content of cognition." (GPRF, n.d.; Sauerberg, 2009) This startling claim is self-admittedly an extension of the work of Marshall McLuhan, to whose legacy we should stipulate that a 'post-Gutenberg reality' won't occur simply because academics are suggesting it. Still, the Forum embodies the problematic of needing better models with which to explain future developments as they occur – it also registers the challenge of having to rethink the relationship between more traditional forms of literature and emerging literacies in a digital age (see Ong and Hartley, 2015: 207-209).

At the 2012 Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, China Miéville gave an extraordinary keynote speech on this very subject, discussing the radical impact global digital connectivity is having on both the forms and practices of writing; to his mind, there are portents of a far greater collective participation in literature than ever before, and far greater possibilities. The novel ("tenacious as a cockroach", he notes) will probably endure though its new distribution will surely transform it. Far more significant, though, than any lingering morbid anxiety over the death or disfigurement of a narrative form is the emancipation that this communicative technology makes possible. However, as the utility and ubiquity of 'being a writer' proliferates and intensifies, the sense of it being 'special' to be a writer will diminish and dissipate; which, for Miéville, is hardly a bad thing. He concludes:

> We live in a world that grossly and violently undervalues the great majority of people in it. […An] unresentful sense of writers as people among people, and a fidelity to literature, require[s] political and economic transformation. For futures for novels – and everything else. (Miéville, 2012)

Miéville, perhaps better than anyone, here imagines the future of the novel, not foremost in its language or characters or concerns but in the overlapping, intermingling relation of reader and writer and text. The text won't be closed, he promises, but then again it never really was.

*   *   *

Divination, when it comes to human endeavours and behaviours, is often hit and miss; we routinely surprise ourselves, in other words. To think categorically about the future, we can begin simply by imagining it as somehow different to the present, replete with desirable or troubling possibilities but separated from our immediate experience by potential change. Then, we can consider how things might progress to such a state: what things would have to happen or not happen for those changes to occur. In asking such questions we give describable reasons to our desires and definable shapes to our fears. We are also, however, inevitably confronted, implicated, with questions of our own capacity and commitment to contribute to change. This thesis, in asking and answering all of these questions about the future of the novel and narrative fiction, employs as its methodology three different, disparate models of prediction:

(i) speculative: the future of the novel as read through the history of the novel, past, and preoccupations of the novel, present; tactically tethering its arguments with figurations common to imaginative fiction – metaphor, synecdoche, and so on – the speculative spans the scope of novel history, finding its framework in both ancient and modern times, and drawing on a wide range of literature to explicate the transformations that have taken place; as a model of perspectives, it takes on board Shakespeare, *Harry Potter* and Japanese mobile phone novels and tells them all as one tale;

(ii) prospective: the future of the novel as clarified by the statistical information that can be garnered about the current states of literacy, reading and the publishing industry; variously contextualised with discussions on the future of reading, the library and a public domain, the prospective is a less adventurous model, confining itself to the century leading into the digital age; as a model of proportions, it promises an accurate record of how things stand, from UNESCO to the OECD, from Amazon to the Big Five publishers, even to the point where it registers its own finite limits;

(iii) which gives way, at the last, to the theoretical: the future of the novel (reading and literacy) reduced to its epistemological skeleton, and fleshed out again by a social and political dimension; to this end it takes three theorists – Richard Hoggart, Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson – and a particular work of each – *The Uses of Literacy*, *The Event of Literature* and *The Antinomies of Realism* – and locates in each a particular, ongoing argument – namely, critical literacy, 'strategy versus commitment' and antinomy – which are connected, expanded and concluded upon; the theoretical, as a model of philosophies, explains how we should understand the significance of a future for the novel, fathom its persistence, assure its relevance.

In this thesis, as in life, these models are only kept separate by convention – the overlap and interaction of their ideas throughout highlights in each section what might be minimised or overlooked in the others. As an analytic approach, therefore, combining these otherwise traditionally discrete methodologies helps reinforce their responses as a whole, and provide a complex, even dialectical, answer, a more complete answer, to the longstanding question of the future of narrative fiction; to begin, at any rate, as Edward Said noted of Raymond Williams, to "try to show the historical processes which made the question possible, rather than to [simply] try and answer it". (Higgins and Said, 2001) With this in mind, and to mark the methodological shifts more clearly, the models have been signposted with examples of novels that best broach or breach them.

The three speculative chapters are introduced by Helen Humphrey's *The Reinvention of Love*, which recontextualises the historical relationship between Victor Hugo, the great 19th-century novelist, and Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, poet, critic, friend and Hugo's wife's lover. This text, sewn together with Sainte-Beuve and Hugo's actual writings and correspondence, intonates a speculative approach, with its grand potential and its forgivable liberties.

The three prospective chapters are preceded by two quotes, one each from the beginning and end of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, the novel which famously introduced the character of Thomas Gradgrind, a man who loves and teaches only 'facts'. Less remembered is the verity, demonstrated by the second quote, that Dickens petitioned his readers to consider and hold onto a different ideal: facts are unimportant compared to what we do with them.

This plea is redoubled, moving into the final theoretical chapters, with a reading which locates at the heart of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, *Remembrance of Things Past*), Marcel Proust's rejection of the presumption of Sainte-Beuve. Sainte-Beuve argued that to know the meaning of a work, look to the author; Proust looks to the reader, instead, predicating or at least predicting the direction of 20th-century literary theory. Proust thus brings us full circle for – as with Dickens and Gradgrind who form a similar dialectical opposition in *Hard Times* – his narrator claims for fiction that 'a work in which there are theories is like an object upon which the price is marked', while Proust built his many-roomed mansion from the theory up. Within such oppositions, from contrasts and contradictions, this thesis proposes and prepares to mount the impossible summit of the future, of novels – and everything else.

SPECULATIVE

Hugo, strong partisan … fought in armour,
And held high his banner in the middle of the tumult;
He still holds it; and Vigny, more discreet,
As if in his ivory tower, retired before noon.

Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, 'Pensés d'Août' / 'Thoughts of August'
(from *Poésies completes*, 1845: 374)[11]

[Victor Hugo] is my neighbour. We live two doors apart on Notre-Dame-des-Champs. He is also my dear friend. I am also in love with his wife. Of Victor's poetry I can say that nothing is better. Of his plays, nothing is worse. It is prudent of him, perhaps, to have recently become a novelist. […] You never have to look further than a man's life to understand his work.

The character of Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve
in Helen Humphreys' *The Reinvention of Love* (2011: 6, 23)

Perhaps some memories are more a foretelling than the reminder of an event that belongs entirely in the past. Perhaps what we remember is merely a continuing truth about ourselves. […] My memories, as I write this down, are often out of sequence, out of time. It does not matter to me that events have slipped their chronology. […] Recollection is exactly that, a re-collection. […] Who we are is determined not just by the choices we make, how we sew events together into narrative. […] Perhaps I am not remembering; writing is not a memorial. This is just what lives in me.

The character of Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve
in *The Reinvention of Love* (ibid.: 14, 101, 243, 249)

There were two friends, no more and no less. I admit that absence has produced an opposite effect on us both. You love me less than you did two years ago, while I love you more. On reflection, the explanation is very simple. I was the offended party. The slow and gradual process of forgetting the events which estranged us acts in your favour in my heart, and against me in yours. Since life is so constituted, let us resign ourselves. (22/08/1833)

This is only to tell you, my friend, that I am hard at work, that I […am] thinking of you, and that I am yours with all my heart. We shall meet soon. Love me. V. (28/08/1833)

Farewell, then, my friend; let us each bury in silence what was already dead in you, and what your letter kills in me. Farewell. V. (01/04/1834)

The letters of Victor Hugo to Sainte-Beuve (in Meurice (ed.), 1896: 210, 212, 214)

But why speak always of authors and writings? Maybe an age is coming when there will be no more writing.

Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, 'What Is A Classic?' (originally from 'Causeries du Lundi',
volume III, 1850; reprinted in Sainte-Beuve, Lee (trans.), 1892: 11)[12]

On one view, all fiction is speculative, just as all literature is comparative.[13] In fact, in this historical moment, all literature is increasingly 'world literature' in its potential reach and affect. This should not be taken too literally, though: if we embrace everything generically we ignore or excise its political content, its social meaning.

There is a choice then, that implied by 'Thoughts of August' (likely where the figuration of the 'ivory tower', meaning academic, first arises), between struggling with the world and retreat, abstention. Humphreys' novel too, with its themes of intimacy and estrangement, is in this way a double re-enactment, setting the table for a speculative approach to the future of the novel.

In my first quotation from *The Reinvention Of Love* we see a traditional, if somewhat mischievous, version of the fictionalising impulse ('refer to the events, dramatise the relationships'); however, throughout the novel Humphreys returns again and again ('re-collected' as a second quote) to the subject of memory and narrative, imposing a critical distance that reminds the reader that all we can see of the past is that which lives on.

And what lives on? Sainte-Beuve, best remembered for his hundreds of literary columns, 'Causeries du lundi' (or 'Monday Chats'), suggests that in the safety of rereading 'a classic' we don't need to read anything new. In the era of ereading this is more possible than ever before, though no more plausible: Sterne made a joke of it long before him, and Carroll after.[14]

Another of Sainte-Beuve's columns, 'On Industrial Literature', a rant about the mercenary mechanics of book publishing, startlingly prefigures McEwan versus Roth in *The Daily Beast*. It begins: "From a distance, we see the literature of a particular age as something very simple and homogenous. From close up, however, it unfolds successively in all manner of diversity and difference." (Lloyd (ed.), 1996: 24) This is, by the way, also the speculative view, the one that creates a distance then closes the gap.

In this case, though, Sainte-Beuve's close-up reveals literature on the verge and an industry in crisis, and he rails against its ruination: "Each, in passing through, has trampled the ground under their feet: who cares about those who will come after? After us, the flood can come!" (ibid.: 31) This despairing sentiment has echoed down the ages but by hearing it reverberate we prevail against its gloom.

CHAPTER ONE: 'NOVEL, MEANING NEW': HISTORICISING THE NOVEL AS A TECHNOLOGY

The present is too much for the senses, Too crowding, too confusing – Too present to imagine.

Robert Frost, 'Carpe Diem' (Frost, 2001: 335)

There is no future for ebooks because they are not books. Ebooks smell like burned fuel.

Ray Bradbury, reportedly speaking to the Associated Press prior to BookExpo America, May, 2008 (Dammann, 2008; Italie, 2008)

This thesis is primarily concerned with the future of narrative fiction, textually embodied in its predominant contemporary form, the novel – literally, a substantial work of fictional narrative in prose. It has a limiting Western focus (the term 'Western' itself admittedly vague, political and ahistorical) and dealing, as it does, with current social and technological developments, also suffers from the hyperopic hazards of speculation.[15] Putting aside the traditional disclaimer, it is nonetheless necessary to construct a micro-history of the technology of the novel, to properly comprehend future texts in this context. Again, here, there are certain epistemological limits that must be acknowledged, the foremost of which being the above-mentioned difficulty of establishing, across the centuries, a causal history. To avoid retreading ground more ably covered by other historians of the novel, therefore, the micro-history of this thesis will initially be clustered around an element beloved (and belaboured) by fiction but usefully succinct in its generality – metaphor. Once this has been outlined – or retraced – this chapter will then shift focus to a handful of popular contemporary novels which can explore and explain the current function of the format in the era of the ebook.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The burning of the Ptolemaic library at Alexandria happened at least once, perhaps multiple times, and exactly which is the foundational (or demolitional) event changes depending on whether you read Plutarch or Edward Gibbon. Heather Phillips, in an essay entitled 'The Great Library of Alexandria?' (*Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2010), instead argues:

> [In] reality, the fortunes of the Great Library waxed and waned with those of Alexandria itself. Much of its downfall was gradual, often bureaucratic, and by comparison to our cultural imaginings, somewhat petty.

This historically contested event[16] paradoxically provides suitable instruction – so much of our own history is lost to us and what remains, what we are taught and what we

learn, is decidedly incomplete. As Jean-Philippe de Tonnac in his introduction to *This Is Not The End Of The Book* writes:

> The history of book production is thus indivisible from the history of a real and continuing bibliocaust. […] Our ancestors' efforts at archiving and conservation have been unable to prevent the permanent loss of unknown *Divine Comedies*. One thing is certain: what we call culture is in fact a lengthy process of selection and filtering. […] Now more than ever, we realise that culture is made up of what remains after everything else has been forgotten. (Carrière and Eco, 2012: ix-x)

Alexandria-as-metaphor throws into relief the situation faced by contemporary libraries in the age of ebooks where the necessary and never-ending duty of culling their own catalogues is attenuated, perhaps even dispelled entirely. As libraries embrace ebook technology, we as readers are taunted with the tantalising vision of never losing a library, our history, again. The caveat, or the cost, of course, is the challenge of navigating such a rapidly expanding labyrinth of texts and, the inverse, the fear of technology failing and losing all our eggs in one digital basket (Holland, 2011).

The modern connotations of Alexandria can also be found in Ray Bradbury's cautionary tale of lost literacy, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), a telling counterpoint to our historical moment. The people of that imagined future have abandoned paper books for a screen medium and, ultimately, the failure of that technology to provide introspection and imagination leads to war and destruction, and the survivors are left to 'remember' literature – to return to an oral culture, to preserve the works – so that future generations can learn from it.

It is noteworthy that *Fahrenheit 451* remains popularly misunderstood as a novel of state rather than self-censorship (BNStudio, 2008), even though this premise is explicitly rejected by Bradbury in the story (Bradbury, 1990: 65). For Bradbury, the state enforces what the citizenry permits, in line with people's practices; and so, the novel's conclusion is hopeful, even utopian – the survivors relax around a fire ('for warming, not burning') and imagine bringing an end to their 'Dark Age' (ibid.: 153, 16). Bradbury's more recent concerns regarding ebooks and digital technology are, in this way, understandable. Contrast this speech by the character Faber in *Fahrenheit 451* to our contemporary experiences of a connected / digital / social media age:

> Most of us can't rush around, talking to everyone, know all the cities of the world, we haven't time, money or that many friends. The things you're looking for […] are in the world, but the only way the average chap will ever see ninety-nine percent of them is in a book. (ibid.: 94)

Simply put, the internet is now the library in which those books are found and yet it also harbours all of the spectacle and surveillance Bradbury loathingly excoriates in his novel – 'three-dimensional sex-magazines', advertising you can't escape from and endless and tormenting distraction (ibid.: 16, 65, 86; Carrière and Eco, 2012: 315). In fact, the novel appears doubly resonant in the face of the ebook era – a generation distracted by technology from the horrors of ongoing war, dulled to the point of numbness by commercialisation, while at the same time holding out the possibility of survival, of knowledge, of culture. It would be unwise therefore to dismiss, out of hand, Bradbury's rejection of the digital format; after all, the Luddite reaction is generally not about machines and technology but of the massive, potentially devastating cultural changes that accompany them.

Beyond that, there is also a sense implicit in Bradbury's scathing comment on ebooks, and even more explicit throughout Eco and Carrière's discussions, that the physicality of the technology of the book affects its reading – the paper, the binding, the layout, the font, the feel of a book in your hands, and its smell, even, or how a previous reader has marked, mutilated or annotated it; the physical act of reading, too, of how you hold a book or where you read it (see also Gass, 1999 and Le Guin, 2008; how different, already – scrolling through an ebook, back-lit in its screen). We can extend this argument: the arguable superiority of a text that doesn't break if you drop it; for the boundless and eternal scope of the digital format is still very much tempered by an anxiety over a corresponding physical fragility, exacerbated by the capitalist trend towards built-in obsolescence, which enhances the disquiet that ebooks – easily duplicated, replaced, overwhelmingly available – are not special, and, by extension, that whatever we read in ebook form may become equally disposable. However, this fear of losing something precious, even sacred, in the act of ereading (de Tonnac in Carrière and Eco, 2012: viii) must be critically situated alongside similar sentiments at the advent of mass-produced books, lending libraries, or even the early printing of books itself:

> For in the end the disorder will become nearly insurmountable; the indefinite multitude of authors will shortly expose them all to the danger of general oblivion; the hope of glory animating many people at work in studies will suddenly cease; it will be perhaps as disgraceful to be an author as it was formerly honorable. […] I shall be told that since so many people write it is impossible for all their works to be preserved. I admit that, and I do not entirely disapprove those little books in fashion which are like […] the fruits of an autumn, scarcely surviving a year. If they are well made, they have the effect of a useful conversation, not simply pleasing and keeping the idle out of mischief but helping to shape the mind and language. (Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1680), quoted in McLuhan, 1962: 254)[17]

The question, seen in this light, is not only aesthetic but properly semantic, about the meaning of books; and so contemporary authors worry and choose how to engage with the technological change: *Fahrenheit 451* was published as an ebook shortly before Bradbury's death due to contractual publishing demands[18]; Stephen King's 2013 novel *Joyland*, contrariwise, was delayed as an ebook, specifically so readers could experience it first in paper form (Bishop, 2012). It is also worthwhile considering the liminal example of Philip M. Parker's 200,000 books written by algorithm, making him, in his words, "the most published author in the history of the planet" (Cohen, 2008). Parker, an economist and professor of marketing, 'developed computer algorithms that collect publicly available information on a subject' which is then compiled and delivered electronically or by print-on-demand (at a cost of about 12 cents in electricity per book). While these works are obviously non-fiction, the *New York Times* also noted: "And he is laying the groundwork for romance novels generated by new algorithms. 'I've already set it up,' he said. 'There are only so many body parts.'" (ibid.)

Putting this bemusing cynicism aside, there remains a vital discursive question over what will, in the future, constitute a novel, a book, a narrative. To revisit Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* is not a rejection of changes to narrative technology per se, only of our tendency to 'screen' ourselves from our lived reality with the pre-scripted parts that we play. Their world still has comics, technical manuals and pornography (again, 'there are only so many body parts') but has excised the challenge, innovation and critique of literature; their 'interactive' screen narratives are devoid of these things too. At the novel's close, the survivors have plans to reprint everything they remember at a suitable, later date. For them, conceptually, a book is a book is the idea of the book.

It is apt then, for our discussion, that the book which the protagonist, Montag, attempts to memorise is the Bible. The Bible is the quintessential Western text transformed by technology – a history of definition / redefinition, of translation, which at the time of printing culminates in a radical schism in the Church, the Reformation (described in extraordinary detail by Febvre and Martin, 1984: 287-319[19]), and its accompanying rearticulation of how believers could access and interpret the text.[20] This context is significant – the history of printing in the West is also an attendant history of book censorship and copyright concerns. As the technology spreads in the 16th century, there is both state / secular and religious opposition to a 'free press', e.g. the Edict of Châteaubriant in France and the chartering of the Stationers' Company in England, restricting the right to print, and the Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, their list of banned books lasting 400 years from Pope Paul IV to Pope Paul VI.[21]

This metaphor of Montag's memorised Bible brings us back to the micro-history. It is essential to see the 15th-century development of the printing press both as an extraordinary moment of complicated cultural change and also, simply, as the

continuation of pre-existing, slow-moving technological developments. First, in material terms, as with the history of paper: the 2nd-century paper that originated in China using the technique of blending linen, hemp rags and plant fibres eventually supplanted writing on silk or bamboo; this then spread westwards – also supplanting writing on papyrus or animal skins (parchment and vellum etc.) – through the Arab world circa 8th century to Europe circa 12th century. Thus, paper: the technology that culturally prioritises prose, the 'language' of the modern novel, over oral traditions. Print, in turn, creates broad access – new cultures, circulation in languages, formats (Febvre and Martin, 1984: ch. 1; Basbanes, 2013: ch. 4). Both shifts, however, are entirely surpassed in the revolutionary 19th-century European technology of steam-driven mills to create wood-pulp paper, not to mention the steam-driven rotary printing press to print on it; even as they all remain part of that continuity of invention (Carrière and Eco, 2012: 27; Basbanes, 2013: 4; Raven in Howsam (ed.), 2015: 146-160).

The development of movable type in wood, ceramics, clay and metal in 11th-13th century China and Korea (see Febvre and Martin, 1984: 71-76; McLuhan, 1962: 40; Pan, 1998: 1681-1692) likewise led, eventually, to 'the Gutenberg Press'.[22] Continuity is not entirely synonymous with linearity, though – a certain complexity is acknowledged. Lynn White Jr., for example, argues that the introduction of the spinning wheel in Europe caused an immense increase in the production of linen that resulted in a glut of recyclable linen material which then fed the paper industry and dropped prices – and only then did Gutenberg have the financial incentives to experiment. In other words, it only appears to be linear (cited in Basbanes, 2013: 62-63).

As for the technology of the press itself, printing on paper using type eroded the cost of copying works, one at a time, by hand, and the cost of raising and slaughtering the animals to provide the material. This changed the use of books – in the Middle Ages, books were not always portable, unlike the vast majority printed after the 15th century (some were the size of the tables on which they lay to be read) and they were typically, almost universally, read aloud, a cultural practice that declined as literacy increased.[23] Bob Johnstone in *Never Mind the Laptops: Kids, Computers, and the Transformation of Learning* provides context by comparison:

> The first books printed using movable type – the so-called incunabula – were, in a sense, like mainframe computers – huge, hence immobile, produced in small quantities (in the case of the [...Gutenberg] Bible, just 180 copies), and affordable only by the very rich. It was not until 40 years later that the real impact of the technology began to be felt, when the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius [...] adapted printing to produce small-format, low-cost books that even poor scholars could afford to buy and carry around with them on their

travels [and thus put the book into its modern dimensions by making it fit into saddlebags]. (Johnstone, 2003: 145)[24]

Thereafter, the content changed too – not just the dwindling of hand-drawn / block-printed illuminations / illustrations (as well as decoration of the text itself; marginalia also) but also the kind of narratives that were popularly reproduced.[25] In a way, the decline in illumination can be loosely paired with the cultural shift from medieval literature, typified by allegory, stories written for and about a communal, consensus view of the world, to the novel. Jorges Luis Borges perhaps expressed it best, in his discussion of this historical shift:

> Allegory is a fable of abstractions as the novel is a fable of individuals. The abstractions are personified; there is something of the novel in every allegory. The individuals that novelists present aspire to be generic […]; there is an element of allegory in novels. The passage from allegory to novel, from species to individual […] required several centuries […]. (Borges, 2000: 339)[26]

As noted, a greater history of the novel has found precedent well before the Middle Ages, in content, if not as popularised form, and yet Borges' argument still holds – that the technology articulated the cultural expression (allegory versus novel): a culture in which only a minority could read and few books were made led to narratives designed for the community, while an increase in readers and reading material led to stories of individual determination (McLuhan, 1962: 104; Febvre and Martin, 1984: 22-24).

Discovering the limits of print technology also took several centuries. In 1916, while remarking on the opening of the Bodley Shakespeare Exhibition, William Osler noted that the vast majority of all books were dead and the intellectual capital of 'the race', as he put it, fit easily on 'the 7-foot shelf of Harvard president Charles Eliot's library'[27]:

> The Bodleian is a huge mausoleum. Books follow a law of nature. […] In the case of the salmon only one in a thousand is fertilized and of these not one in a thousand reaches maturity. So it is with books – a thousand or more are needed to secure the transmission of a single one of our very limited stock of ideas. Were all the eggs of all the salmon to reach maturity the sea could not contain this one species, while the world itself could not contain the books that would be written did even one in a thousand transmit a fertile idea. (Osler, 1916: 1-2)

As this reference to Osler demonstrates, a century later, these early-20th-century assumptions will no longer hold into the future but, while the works of William Shakespeare *are* enduring, it is also crucial to remember the role technology played in the preservation of that legacy – that without the printing of the *First Folio* in 1623, its

reprints or the succession of mass market editions, the continued popularity of Shakespeare is improbable. (Or, as Marshall McLuhan puts it in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*: "[Shakespeare] was little attracted into the print mode and made no effort to publish, since the circulation of his work in print form would have conferred no dignity on him"[28].) Technology continues to preserve that legacy, extend that 'dignity', as part of the current movement towards digitising and making digitally available the historical record of literature. For example, the British Library offers 107 copies of the 21 plays published in quarto before the 1624 theatre closures, the Shakespeare Quartos Archive has 32 copies of the first five published versions of *Hamlet* and the Bodleian Library has finally digitised their re-acquired *First Folio*, which they sold when the *Third Folio* was printed in 1664 (British Library, 2016; Shakespeare Quartos Archive, 2016; Kennedy, 2012).

Reading Shakespeare online is another useful metaphor, then, for our anxious *Fahrenheit 451*-like cultural conditioning regarding ebook propriety. Consider the Bodleian *First Folio*, the digital facsimile of which shows the scars on the book's cover from when it was chained to the library shelves, a sign of its value, or the online editions of the expurgated 'Bowdlerised' *Family Shakespeare*, which removed 'offensive' elements of the text, as compiled / mutilated by Thomas and Harriet Bowdler (see Bowdler, 1847). Superficially, in these examples we have the lifelessness of the scanned copy balancing the perfect, digital protection of the text itself. Turning the page, metaphorically, we have outrage at the defacement of the legacy – a cited concern of some contemporary novelists relating to online access, of readers 'crowdsourcing' and 'remixing' their works (Miéville, 2012) – placated by our recognition that there is nothing new in any of this, in a literary history spanning *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* (somewhere in the 8th century) and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009). Indeed, in such contrasting cultural and historical assumptions of, say, oral storytelling, adaptation / translation and ghost-writing, of who 'owns' a story and who tells it, there is little difference between past and present experience.[29]

This underlines a different concern, as well. The defence of 'Bowdlerisation' was that Shakespeare (literature) could then be appreciated by children (and, indeed, women) – and clearly proprieties change – but the contemporary version of that sentiment is 'anything that gets kids to read' and away from their 'other' screened entertainments, anything that makes them 'literate', is a good book (even if it's an ebook). And yet people continue to worry, alongside Bradbury – what if it is not our ability to read but what we read that makes us literate?

To sum up – the notion that the mid-15th-century implementation of the printing press revolutionised literature is something of a truism; our ability to separate culture from technology from literature is a more complicated nexus of historical cause and effect. What can be identified from a 21st-century perspective is that, origin stories aside, books

printed on paper are a 'legacy system', a technological term for an old or seemingly outdated way of working that continues to be used or, at least, continues to have an impact even when newer, more efficient technology is available. At this point in time, paper books work, paper books make sense to humanity – and the cost of replacing them with some form of screen(ed) narrative, and retraining readers to utilise a new form (a new structure, a new language even) is deferred. But for how long?

*   *   *

For argument's sake, let us assume that the novel was never so much 'new' as it was largely just another cultural shift in literary style, tone, subject, popularity and so on, which appeared to 'reinvent the wheel'. What was (and is always) more significant was the ways readers adopted the technologies involved and helped, to put it in a 'more-or-less modern' parlance, 'change the flat tyre of literature'. As Steven Moore notes, there is also some irony in the contemporary reading public's attitude towards 'realistic fiction' as the popular interpretation of the history and purpose of the novel ('born in the 18th century, brought up – or popularised – in the 19th century'; Moore, 2010: 3): its 'long history' clearly outlines a tradition of innovation, from which 'realist(ic)' narrative was only a tributary that became the 'main' stream (ibid.: 6; Moore, 2013).

This popularisation is often indicated / indicted as a shift towards 'entertainment over art' during the centuries in question; and this is still the continuing rhetorical dichotomy of disagreements over the form and function of the novel. Moore rebels against this perception (mass and critical) that modernist, postmodernist and contemporary authors of imaginative, experimental iterations of the novel, such as Joyce, Barth, Pynchon, Gaddis, McCarthy etc., are unnecessarily complicated, too difficult to be of any use (or fun) reading. However, while elaborating the tradition and valorising the variety of engagements authors have attempted, he almost ends up sidestepping his own argument, demurring with 'just because it's not for everyone, doesn't mean it's for no-one' (ibid.: 25). Although Moore has decisively made a case regarding lineages, questions remain as to how and why the 'realistic' novel is still imagined to be the preferred / proper use of the novel (or why people think they like what they think they like – why is it so pervasive).[30]

To begin with, there should be little doubt that the popular history of the novel is truncated and oversimplified and that the popular contemporary novel is somewhat removed from its own perceived trajectory. Initially, admittedly, this may seem unfairly levelling of many great literary historians and theorists but it is in the service of an argument – that to discuss the possible future history of the novel we must first pick apart how it is still bound as a whole. It is this holistic sense which has led to the ongoing, perceived 'triumph of the realistic'; one only need riffle through the English-language

bestsellers of the early 21st century (*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, *The Hunger Games*, Dan Brown's 'Robert Langdon' novels and Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* series) to be wary of that perception.

It is striking how much the most popular contemporary novels have in common. They are typically a series of novels and generally embody two very traditional themes: the significance of early family life to the character of an individual and the struggle between the individual and authority, usually resulting in the reinvestment of the individual in the system – in other words, finding one's place in the world, which is, by far, the happiest of endings.[31] In this sense, they merely recuperate / reincorporate a 21st-century manifestation of the 'bildungsroman' or 'coming of age' narratives of the prior two centuries; but while the 'meta-tale' of literature is traditionally the journey from innocence to experience, from ignorance to wisdom, these books have far more significant detail in common than that.[32]

For example, the same (back)story appears for Robert Langdon in Brown's books (*The Da Vinci Code*, etc.), for Katniss in *The Hunger Games* and Ana Steele in *Fifty Shades Of Grey* – their fathers die when the main characters are children (whereas both of Harry Potter's parents are dead). In fact, the broken relationships of the parents in both *Fifty Shades Of Grey* and *Twilight* are foundational in the relationships formed by Ana Steele and Bella Swan in their respective worlds (ruthless capitalist Christian Grey being the 'real-world' mirror of undead vampire Edward Cullen), culminating in their struggle with the decision to get married and procreate. They do, of course – revealing that the objective of these works is not the embrace / 'romance' of deviant pleasure but the proper, conservative recapitulation / reinstatement / renewal of women within patriarchal structures (none of which is a surprise – arguably those are the politics of romance novels; it is worth noting that Harry and Ginny are married with children in the epilogue to the *Harry Potter* books and Katniss and Peeta in *The Hunger Games* also have children).

This is inverted in Larsson's *Millennium* series. Written in Swedish but with their success in large part due to their popular English translation, they begin with *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, whose political content is rendered far more clearly in the original Swedish title, *Män som hatar kvinnor*, that is, 'men who hate women'. Salander, the misanthropic heroine desires but ultimately rejects a romantic relationship with Blomkvist, her male counterpart in the books. While their friendship endures throughout the trilogy, Salander's character is increasingly expressed in terms of her relationship with her abusive biological father, Zalachenko, who assaulted Salander's mother and left her brain-damaged; the resulting story is a symbolic 'heroine's journey' to resist, to punish and finally to destroy patriarchy and the state.

More broadly, all of these six series are models for the conflict (resolution) between their generation of readers and authority ('the big Other'): for Harry Potter, the family, the school and, as the struggle spreads, the state; for Salander and Blomkvist, the family and the state; for Bella and Edward, the family and the vampire aristocracy / state – 'the Volturi'; for Katniss, the individual and the state; for Robert Langdon, the individual and church and state; and for Ana Steele, the individual and sexual convention in patriarchal culture (although, as noted, in the end the triumphant superego renders a certain amount of reinvestment in the 'libidinal economy'[33]). In structural terms, these late 20th- and early 21st-century novel series seemingly mimic the 19th-century long-form epics (Dickens, Tolstoy, Hugo etc.), with the exception of Dan Brown, whose work is more recursive and episodic; although broken up into shorter, individual volumes, they continue – in their 'demands of the market' condition – the dual traditions of both ongoing serialisation and epic narrative. These structures are not even that 'modern', of course – *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* is famously both a book (1605) and its sequel (1615), both epic and episodic (McKeon, 1988: 273) – and, structurally speaking, the novel-cycles of the 19th century appear far more complicated and diverse than casual literary histories can easily acknowledge or elucidate – the breadth of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* (1829-1848), for example, arguably confounds the easy line of 'romanticism, realism, naturalism'.[34]

As for content, three of them are written, quite obviously, for children transitioning into adolescence (*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Hunger Games*) and two of the others are only barely-veiled generic 'super-texts' – the Robert Langdon novels simply update the 'boy's-own adventure', or 'romance for men', whose popularity in style and structure dates back at least to Henry Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure* (1887), detouring through the conspiracy-rich spy / thriller conventions of the 20th century (Clancy, Cussler, Fleming, Forsyth and Ludlum, in particular); E.L. James, in turn, borrows a little (or a lot) from a romance tradition that may lay claim to Austen, Bronte and Thomas Hardy[35], but should be equally understood as the century-old legacy of Mills & Boon and its parent company and long-term distributor, Harlequin, who dominates the publishing of 'romance', releasing more than 110 novels a month and selling about 4 books every second (Harlequin, 2016a, 2016b; James may be published by Random House but her debt lies elsewhere, obligated / overdrawn – the influence of hundreds of novels apiece – to the giants of the genre: Cartland, Collins, Dailey, Roberts, and Steel, in particular).

Thus, the dominant iteration of early 21st-century popular fiction is fantasy, largely 'boy's-own' and 'girl's-own' adventures, with Larsson the obvious exception, whose unrelenting political positions transcend traditional thriller. It is perhaps also valuable to consider the other operative trends here – that the works of fantasy discussed are predominantly written by women and that the marketing category employed (over and

above any authorial intent) is the relatively recent adoption of what is referred to as 'young adult' fiction; hence the twin recurring themes of family and finding one's place in the world.

We can see this reverberating in the popular success of the *Fifty Shades* trilogy. First, in terms of a new technology, the anonymity of the ebook interface potentially allowed women (and men, and, presumably, curious young adults of either gender) the security of reading 'smut' unjudged – the new 'plain brown wrapper'; more pertinently, simply being able to access the text anywhere at any time and at a reduced rate from a paper book 'allowed women' (etc.) to more immediately participate in the cultural trend promulgated through social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Rosman, 2012; Freedman, 2012). Second, the fantasies involved in *Fifty Shades*, while by and large traditional / generic romance, nonetheless reflect a young adult arc: the heroine, at the stated age of 22, displays many 'younger' characteristics – 'adorable' / awkward clumsiness, contemporary taste in music, sexual naivety, etc. – but when Ana engages in S&M (or, by comparison, when Bella becomes a vampire) she thereby defuses / resolves the threatening otherness of male sexuality. Both *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades* are about maturation, 'becoming women', the conclusive end result of 'young adult(hood)' for girls. Lastly, aside from broad, popular appeal, there is a critical consensus that the books are 'poorly written' – an accusation that has been levelled at most of the novel series in question (indeed, historically, against much popular fiction) but particularly, decisively, about the writings of Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer, and twice over for E.L. James (Walker, 2009; Hand, 2008; Flood, 2009; Barnett, 2012; Bradford, 2012; The Washington Post Editorial, 2012).

On the *BBC Radio 4: Books And Authors* podcast (Frostrup, 30/12/2012), author Naomi Alderman defended (praised with faint damnation) James's success:

> It is hackneyed and I find it incredibly boring. I think female submissive fantasies are boring but I think if there's one thing that […] big fiction hits tell us it's that the general reading public often do not really care about great writing and don't mind about hearing clichéd stories, you know. They never minded about *The Da Vinci Code*, they haven't minded about a number of huge books over the years, so that's just the truth of the matter.

This is a useful point at which to compare the anxiety of last century's 'death of the novel', meaning 'the death of literature', of valued aesthetic content identifiable as 'literature' – a decrepitude of structure, characterisation or language, and also, at various socio-historical points, concern with a faltering use-value – from more recent death knells of technology: that 'paper books are dead and the ebook is written in eternity'. What becomes immediately interesting, then, is the 'incline of language'[36]: are these successful, contemporary writers merely connecting with an existing readership that speaks their

language, and/or have these readers been educated to read novels in a way or for a purpose that has changed or is changing from previous generations of readers? Or, to put it another way, how do we determine the character of our literacy?

It is intuitive that radio, cinema, television (et al. etc.) not only reflects but has greatly influenced how people of the 20th century spoke and acted, and that this interaction would translate across technologies; even now, few successful fiction books evade adaptation for the screen, and a significant percentage of movies and TV shows are subsequently novelised. The obvious extension – that the digital age will produce and translate and circulate works in its own language(s) – seems hardly revelatory now but begs the question: are moments such as Ana and Christian having sex with each other via email simply the artless modernisation of the structure of Richardson's epistolary novels (via such intercessors as *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996)) or do *Fifty Shades* and the other popular novels reflect a changing technology of narrative and readership? Whether it is 'bad writing for bad readers' (to invert Emerson's thoughtful phrase; 1875, 264-265[37]) or the publishing triumph of 'young adult', or both, what are the preconditions and ramifications of such a transformation?

First of all, 'bad readers' is not really intended to be understood pejoratively here – simply that the success of the books is a reflection of societal needs being met in contemporary narrative, as seen in a generation, largely well-educated enough to be literate but raised in a culture of screens, inspired by the novelty of discovering *Harry Potter* or R.L. Stine or whichever author has 'reinvented' books for them. Furthermore, to the extent that 'young adult' fiction is a marketing phenomenon, it nonetheless has happened in the context of broader social change (consider, for example, how the economic conditions of the cinema of the 1980s produced the 'summer blockbuster'; Shone, 2004).[38] Concerns over the readability / originality of the *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *Hunger Games* series are therefore ultimately moot; the relief of parents worldwide that their offspring have something to read ('finally!') is a notion that is at best ahistorical (however genuinely perceived) and, at worst, a comprehensible if cynical marketing lineage – for one could easily posit earlier alternatives in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), *The Chronicles of Prydain* (1964-1968) and *The Neverending Story* (1979; English translation in 1983).

As for ramifications, they are obviously ongoing. What are the likely consequences on language (and subsequently on thought) of the culture of globalisation? Perhaps it might expedite an increase in communication and correspondence, in mixing and merging cultures. As we can see, some changes are already apparent in Western cultures; is this yet another demonstration that language is an entwined (structural) technology with the technologies of its textual presentation? It was not just, as noted, that silent reading was

a learned practice arising from the Middle Ages, but the way language was written also changed. As Paul Saenger argues in the *Lingua Franca* podcast (Zijlstra, 05/01/2013):

> One cannot think of Saint Thomas Aquinas having composed the *Summa Theologica* in scriptura continua [Latin written in continuous script, words written without spaces]; the medium becomes part of the message.[39]

Is it so credulous to speculate whether the 'bad' language of contemporary bestselling fiction has another meaning beyond the superficial telling of a story and the perceived failings of its authors? Structure and language: there can be little doubt we write and we read differently due to such 'technologies'. As for the content – subject matter, style etc. – there can also be little doubt that the ascension / assumption of realism reflects the historical dominance within Western cultures of a narrative mode that proved so popular it effectively became invisible; in subsequent speculative divergences such as fantasy and SF we can see just how far our borders have now been redrawn.

CHAPTER TWO: 'MYTH AS A MEMORY, PULP AS A PRACTICE': *HARRY POTTER* AND THE AGE OF SPECULATIVE FICTION

> This persistent and particular version of the Golden Age, a myth functioning as a memory, could then be used, by the landless, as an aspiration.
>
> **Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1975: 43)**

> And thus their spokesman said. 'For seven hundred years the chiefs of your race have ruled us well; and their deeds are remembered by the minor minstrels, living on yet in their little tinkling songs. And yet the generations stream away, and there is no new thing.' 'What would you?' said the lord. 'We would be ruled by a magic lord,' they said. 'So be it,' said the lord.
>
> **Lord Dunsany, 'The King of Elfland's Daughter' (1924; reprinted in Wilkins (ed.), 1981: 349)**

We can begin with a broad, not uncommon hypothesis – that the literature embraced by an age, its sagas, romances, novels and so on, functions both as entertainment and social instrument, and that it formulates and incorporates an ongoing, temporal, mythology of the past for the present and likewise prepares the present for the future. The line of Raymond Williams above, about the power of the popular imagination in the restructuring of reality, would be one example. Myth and fiction are distinct, however, because, as Frank Kermode stipulates, "[fictions] are for finding things out and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent." (2000: 39)[40]

The crux of Lord Dunsany's story above, following on from this, hints at a history only relatively recently being realised, in the latter 20th and early 21st century – of an immortal and paradoxically incidental type of fiction, the current ubiquity of which rivals 19th-century realism / naturalism and its 20th-century hangover in modernism / postmodernism. That is, 'pulp fiction' as 'genre fiction' as 'speculative fiction', more specifically – 'fantasy' and its conjoined twin 'SF'.[41]

The apex of this is the *Harry Potter* series. It is structurally the most interesting of the contemporary bestsellers in that the readers 'grow up' with the characters, each book in the series maturing stylistically and thematically, aging along with the readership. At the end of the series, Dumbledore, Harry's mentor and substitute / symbolic father, is finally revealed to have been as imperfect, humanely flawed, as Harry's biological father was, and Harry is forced to grow up, to make his own decisions independent of an established authority. Rowling's 'reality' is also arguably more nuanced than, by way of comparison, Stephenie Meyer's – her textbooks that come to life, or messages that speak themselves, are familiar as fictional parentheticals to the children of tablets and tweets (a magic indistinguishable from advanced technology, to invert Arthur C. Clarke's aphorism). Is this sensitivity to the worldview of her readership correlative to Rowling's use of language,

writing of and for children? There is something in this idea unexpectedly reminiscent of Roald Dahl, or Charles Dickens through the eyes of George Orwell:

> [There…] is always hope for the individual human being, if you can catch him young enough. This belief partly accounts for Dickens's preoccupation with childhood. […] Dickens has been able to stand both inside and outside the child's mind, in such a way that the same scene can be wild burlesque or sinister reality, according to the age at which one reads it. […] All the isolation of childhood is there. And how accurately he has recorded the mechanisms of the child's mind, its visualizing tendency, its sensitiveness to certain kinds of impression. (Orwell, *Charles Dickens*, 2014: n. pag.)[42]

J.K. Rowling's particular use of language (or Roald Dahl's even) may seem unsophisticated but her sympathetic understanding of childhood is undeniable, particularly illustrated by her construction of 'made-up' proper nouns – people and place names, the names of spells (the mix of languages in the name 'Dumbledore', or puns on place names e.g. 'Diagon Alley', or the bad Latin of 'Priori Incantatum' etc.) – words that seem like naïve mistranslations or inept spelling mistakes to grownups nonetheless make sense to and delight children whose lexicons are, by and large, immature and incomplete. And like Dahl or Dickens, Rowling does not shy away – as the books continue, as the readers grow up – from the increasing seriousness of relationships between children and adults.

Two of the fiercest critiques of Rowling, however – Harold Bloom's 'Dumbing down American readers' and A.S. Byatt's 'Harry Potter and the Childish Adult' – are furiously dismissive of her early prose and plotting. Bloom writes:

> The writing was dreadful; the book was terrible. […] Rowling's mind is so governed by clichés and dead metaphors that she has no other style of writing. But when I wrote that in a newspaper, I was denounced. I was told that children would now read only J.K. Rowling, and I was asked whether that wasn't, after all, better than reading nothing at all? If Rowling was what it took to make them pick up a book, wasn't that a good thing? It is not. (Bloom, 2003)

Byatt for her part finds it a pale imitation, grudgingly concluding:

> Ms. Rowling's world is a secondary secondary world, made up of intelligently patchworked derivative motifs from all sorts of children's literature. (Byatt, 2003)[43]

Now, Bloom has witnessed a sea-change (Rowling, Stephen King) and it has made him (sea)sick – commercial success spawning critical (or critical mass) appreciation. He provides little explanation for this turn, although Byatt has some measure of a response:

> It is the substitution of celebrity for heroism that has fed this phenomenon. And it is the leveling effect of cultural studies, which are as interested in hype and popularity as they are in literary merit, which they don't really believe exists. It's fine to compare the Brontës with bodice-rippers. It's become respectable to read and discuss what Roland Barthes called 'consumable' books. (ibid.)[44]

Byatt has misread Barthes, or at best unproductively read. Consumable texts are not merely 'disposable' diversions; they are, for him, texts where the author is seen as the authority, where meaning is fixed, commodified. 'Consumable' is an operation, an option, not a quality of a text (the fact that he wrote an entire book interpreting a single short story by Balzac should have been indicative; Barthes, 1995: 15-16). 'Respectability' is also a rather odd word for it – there is a certain obvious necessity to relating to the world on its own terms (as well as then, in turn, creating new terms to express it to itself). But Byatt is as right about celebrity – capitalism's intentional marketing of heroism as a consumable commodity (seemingly valuable yet ultimately empty, seemingly exceptional yet ultimately disposable) and, by extension, the celebrity accorded to certain 'popular' authors – as she is exactly wrong about cultural studies (with its foundational – cartographic not levelling – critiques of capitalism and culture[45]), as if she doesn't really believe that hype and popularity have any measurable or analytical social significance.

In any event, challenging 'consumptive' capitalism provides no further circumspection or insight than does critiquing the consecration of a canon: they are similar yet opposing impulses, targeting turgid traditionalism or being disgusted by disposability, representing too much or too little change. What is arguably significant about the mundane enchantments and commonplace raptures to be found in contemporary fiction is not merely another bout of 'the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns' but our continued dedication to understanding the context of popular culture, to explore its mechanics as well as its products, and otherwise inform our consideration of the politics of our enjoyment. Helpfully, there is a strong current of historical precedent. On serialised novels, and on Dickens in particular, Belinda Jack writes (2012: 252-253):

> During the course of the nineteenth century there was a growing awareness that the novel had begun to divide. Two large and distinct reading publics emerged, one more educated, one less so. […] This division was exacerbated by a complex set of causes and effects working on each other. […] Three constraints bore on their reading habits: what was available on the market,

what was affordable, and time. The last had the most direct effect on what was produced. [...] Periodical publication synchronised with the lifestyle of [... the working class, which] in turn put pressure on certain novelists to think less about the total effect of their novel, and more about the immediate impact of its parts.[46]

In other words, a changing culture experienced a new technology of writing (serialisation) that altered not just how they read but what. Before we historicise this, however, one more point: it is a very small jump from comprehending the role of working-class readers in the popularisation of the 'realistic novel' to considering the influence of a young and global 'consuming class' of readers on both the popularisation and construction of the 'contemporary novel' – and to then go on and speculate on the future impacts of availability, affordability and time. Given that our projected understanding of ebooks promises mass availability and increasing affordability, time is the deciding factor; for one thing, even in a well-educated society, it is primarily children (as a group, a class) engaged in the task of 'becoming literate' who are actively encouraged to make the time to read, especially fiction; and, again, there are questions as to what purposes this literacy should or will be put.

The query here and now is – what if the contemporary consuming class was not merely young but 'reading young' – the exact role of grown-up readers in the success of YA is not well-understood but certainly recognisable in the readership of *Harry Potter* et al. *Publishers Weekly* reported (2012d), citing a study by Bowker, that "more than half the consumers of books classified for young adults [...] are 18 or older, with the largest segment aged 30 to 44, a group that alone accounted for 28% of YA sales." Given the huge YA market, this makes "adult consumers of YA books [...] among the most coveted demographic of book consumers overall" (ibid.).

On *The Penguin Podcast* of 08/08/2012, two YA authors were confronted with this question of 'crossover appeal'. Alex Scarrow, author of the *TimeRiders* series (2010-present), responded by saying:

Well, I can't help feeling that what's fuelling the success of the young adult genre is the fact that a lot of adults are secretly reading it and I think this is partly because of things like the Kindle ebooks, that you can read a book anonymously [...] and I think that's helped to allow adults to feel less self-conscious about reading outside of what is their targeted age group. (Reid, 2012)

Eoin Colfer, author of the *Artemis Fowl* books (in which a teenage criminal mastermind captures a magical fairy and uses her to defeat his various enemies; 2001-2012), on the other hand, played it down:

> I think it's something to do with the style of the writing. I have always said that if it's a genuinely good book, any book, it will be enjoyed by anybody who can read it. (ibid.)

By the end, Scarrow and Colfer have it both ways: YA is good because adults can 'access' it but it's also good because it challenges "teen readers into reading material that is borderline adult or even adult" (ibid.). But what if it's not just 'reading young' – Byatt suggests a nostalgia for the fantastic, for a prior period in a reader's life when they were enchanted by reading, e.g. childhood – or 'reading dumb', à la Bloom? What if there is a 'need', let us say, for speculative fiction in contemporary readerships? What if there is, in fact, a greater significance to Rowling's 'language that speaks to children' – or even Meyer's, arguably, trading off nuance for narrative so that her adolescent readership can 'work through' subject matter significant to them, like bodily transformation and sexuality; or even E.L. James's audience, delighting in ironically self-aware clichés, the fun self-referential playfulness of fan fiction? What if all of this is just a perceptible shift in the fabrication of language in fiction, reflecting a change, circulation, in culture, economy and technology?

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

> [The] latter decades of the 19th century were the crucial phase of the development of the categories of the 'high' and 'low' as they now operate institutionally. [While] Thomas Wright [in his essay *Popular Fiction*] had divided the high from the low in 1881, and 20 years later the *Times Literary Supplement* was set up to distinguish the 'better authors' from the 'rubbish heap of incompetence,' it should not be forgotten that there was an equally belligerent assertion for the moral superiority of the re-vivified 'Romance'. Largely in the pages of *The Contemporary Review*, [...] Rider Haggard, and others attacked the effete etiolation of the modern 'serious' novel and argued for the 'muscular' romance or adventure story. [...This was] the moment in which the sites (increasingly low priced, increasingly specialized fiction magazines), terminology ([...] 'bestseller' was coined in 1889), and the very forms and genres of the modern concept of popular literature were founded.
>
> **Roger Luckhurst, 'The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic' in *Science Fiction Studies* (#62, Volume 21, Part 1, March, 1994)**

To return to the historicisation of the novel: the knock-on effects of serialisation shaped popular 20th-century narrative. It structured readers by changing the desired length of a novel, to be read in sections, and through its re-evaluation of pacing and plot, in the repetitive 'invention' of dramatic elements to pique the reader's ongoing interest. As noted, the circulation of narratives amongst diverse textual media, such as magazines and comics, radio, the cinema and television, also played a large part but two other

distinct developments are equally noteworthy. The first was an intensified concern with the portability of literature, for use during travel; again, the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation are felt in the perceived need for entertainment that can be affordably consumed by an increasingly-educated working class – and broadening middle class – in transit. This in turn was mirrored by another development, the formation / fomenting of genres arising from the succession of 'pulp fiction'.

The change in form came first. Steam power was the necessary precondition in printing that resulted in the prevalence of newspapers and other periodicals; this structuring experience of text, in turn, led to serialisation in both newspapers and magazines and later the popularisation of the short story form (1870-1925).[47] The economics of this new format also lent itself to the development of pulp literature, cheaply printed on cheap, untrimmed paper, authored by – mainly, comparatively – lower-paid authors, which thus competed successfully against their slicker, glossier counterparts for the mass market. The pulps popularised specific types of stories – pulp 'genre' fiction – far more decisively than novels or the 'slicks' and these would prove influential (and, arguably, ultimately dominant in the fiction market – as we saw with the 21st-century bestsellers) – as a mode of consumption with its attendant expression.[48] Following on, these genres produced their own distinctive elements – language, style, structure and so on – which coalesced into their own narrative forms.

The utilisation of steam technology via the railroad also produced a concomitant literature (and a new 'channel' for sales), the 'yellow-back', named for the ubiquitous colour of the cover, or 'railway novel' (which would be followed, a century later, in the popularity of the 'airport novel'[49]) – cheap, mass-produced books, primarily reprints of previously published novels designed to compete with, on the one hand, the 'traditional' cloth-bound novel, and, on the other, the ruinously cheap literature of 'story papers' and the like; the aim – to sell more copies of more titles at lower prices for a higher overall profit.[50] Jack notes:

> The nineteenth century had seen certain paperback innovations in the form of penny dreadfuls and dime novels [for the UK and US markets, respectively]. But their share of the market was nothing compared to the twentieth-century paperback. The decisive breakthrough was [the…] result of changes in sales channels and retailers [particularly Pocket Books in the US – founded by Robert Fair de Graff, backed by Simon & Schuster – and Penguin Books in the UK, selling millions of books at news-stands in high-traffic areas and in shops like Woolworth's]. Paperback originals (that is, new books not previously published in hardback) emerged in the late 1930s. (2012: 280)

The new format (in the new sales channel) was then, again, changed utterly in the West by a significant historical event: when the outbreak of hostilities in the Second World War resulted in drastic rationing of paper supplies for printing. This would signal the beginning of the end of the popularity of 'story papers' and the diversification of pulp magazines and a marked migration of this content to the '50's 'paperback' novel market (and other competing print media, e.g. 'glossies' and comics), particularly through the adaptability of the crime, romance, supernatural horror, and science fiction and fantasy genres (Landon, 2002: 40-58).[51] Why certain genres survived the transition better than others is an excellent question. Obviously, genres that relied on 'old technology' settings dwindled – 'thrilling adventures' at sea, on the railroads and, eventually, the distinctly American genre of 'the Western' (although every other aspect of that genre, except the historical setting, still thrives in other locales[52]). Stories of adventure or war or sport, on the other hand, were absorbed into a more-mainstream understanding of what literature entailed (hence Dan Brown, amongst others; although, with the notable exception of John Grisham, 'sport fiction' is weirdly underrepresented in comparison to the popularity of sport itself).

To summarise this more simply: the solidification of genre that dominated sales of late 20th- and early 21st-century novels materialised technologically as pulp in the late 19th and early 20th century; and critical distinctions between, and popular understanding thereof, 'high literature' and 'fiction' and 'trash' (which were not 'new' attitudes towards fiction, as much as they historically marked the maintenance of class divisions, but become prominent conceptual and capitalised-on categorisations circa pulp) were formed and formulated in relation to the cultural / historical push towards 'universal literacy'. And, as serialisation shaped the novel, 'categories of worth' shaped speculative fiction, starkly realised against the backdrop of the ongoing championing of 'novel' realism.

In 1789, the Romantic-era poet Anna Seward wrote:

> The contemptible rage for novel-reading, is a pernicious and deplorably prevalent taste, which vitiates and palls the appetite for literary food of a more nutritive and wholesome kind. It surprises me that superior genius stoops to feed this reigning folly, to administer sweet poison for the age's tooth. (Cited in Jack, 2012: 2)[53]

How seriously we should consider Seward's critique (or her surprise) is debatable, except to the extent that it is, perhaps less poetically, repeated in each era.[54] On the one hand, a concern with the 19th century's taste for 'sensation' novels about bigamy or marrying one's sister's wife, for example, should not succumb to 'monovalent readings of a multivalent form' (Pope, 2008: 4), as genre is not merely expressive of social affairs and disquiets but also explicative and questioning of them; and transforms them.[55] Contrarily,

at times the hegemony of a genre or its tropes must nonetheless be considered equally revealing, as per the predominance of superheroes in comic books (Ellis, 2001: 77-80). In any case, while the exact significance of derivative (at worst) or mimetic bloodline (at best) stories of magic and vampires for our era is arguable, the fact of fantasy's dominance of contemporary literature is less so. In her introduction to Borges' edited collection *The Book of Fantasy*, Ursula Le Guin foreshadowed as much (1990: 13):

> If in the 1890s fantasy appeared to be a kind of literary fungus-growth, if in the 1920s it was still perceived as secondary, if in the 1980s it has been degraded by commercial exploitation, it may well seem quite safe and proper to the critics to ignore it. And yet I think that our narrative fiction has been going slowly and vaguely and massively, not in the wash and slap of fad and fashion but as a deep current, for years, in one direction, and that that direction is the way of fantasy.

Again, how to account for this? The popular success of the narrative category 'fantasy fiction' in the latter half of the 20th century can largely be laid at the feet of Lord Dunsany (little known outside the genre, foundational within it[56]). Dunsany's work begot two arguably more familiar traditions – those of the mainstream literary giants, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and the pulp mythologists, like H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard (who published the *Conan* stories in *Weird Tales* between 1932 and 1936). These traditions in turn attracted an asteroid belt of the inspired, the influenced and the imitative around them that grows even today; in approximate numbers, perhaps a billion books sold in my lifetime.[57] These four writers are also specifically implicated in another way – fantasy's primary theme is arguably the imagination / creation of other worlds, or, its counterpoint, crossing the threshold from one world to another – and these four 'wrote the book' on that, as it were, on the finding or founding of parallel universes, symbolic or literal.[58]

Notwithstanding that all fiction is presumed to be entertaining and/or informing, fantasy literature, enjoined in these parameters, has particularly suffered over the last century or so in its perceived opposition to realism and realism's outliers, experienced (arguably by those who didn't read it) as mere diversion, distraction, a cultural discharge. There is an apposite case to be made or maintained, however, that the rise in fantasy has not been a 'great escapism'[59], a retreat from the 'over-technologised' world, but in fact quite the opposite, a more mechanical manoeuvre resulting from coming face to face with 'the other'[60], encapsulating the re-evaluation, re-inscription and redistribution of cultural difference, in spirals of ever-increasing, migrating, globalisation. To rephrase an argument of Josephine McDonagh ("Mobility, as the condition of modernity, I suggest, is both the concealed provocation to and secret subject of realism"; in Beaumont (ed.), 2007: 66) – it is our experience of globalisation, as the condition of the contemporary[61], that is both the obvious provocation to and often overt subject of popular fantasy.

To recap this, in turn[62]: the 'romantic' or 'romance' novel in 18th-century Europe and the 'realist' and 'naturalist' novels of the 19th century were products of their socio-political landscape (broad access and availability being subsequent considerations to the creation of a new class of reader) but while romanticism was a kind of aesthetic feedback to the spread of industrialisation, realism was a response of paradoxically dual democratic and nationalistic proportions to industrialisation's dominance; and modernism, and postmodernism thereafter, rippling reactions to its empirical expansion and ultimate convolution and self-contradiction.[63]

The distinct and venerated European novel structure in the 20th century has fractured a little under the gaze of other cultures and the weight of other media but its narratives have proliferated and thrived, particularly that mode given to (finding a place in) new worlds. Thus, contemporary fantasy like Rick Riordan's *Camp Half-Blood* books (2005-ongoing), Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001) or Tim Powers' *Fault Lines* series (1992-1997) demonstrate a reconnection with a Steven Moore-esque 'long history'; whether new takes on *Gilgamesh*, or Norse sagas, Greek fables and Roman legends, German fairytales and African folktales, or Indian parables or Asian allegories, such works chronicle a specific mythology / mythopoetics of the present – one that 'presents' its readers with a story that makes sense of their world, even as it reframes it. This, as it turns out, is also the striking conclusion of *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, where reality is swallowed up, encompassed by the fantasy realm, but both continue to exist and yet are forever altered.[64]

For, in the end, it is unnecessary to exhaustively account for, to separate, how and why and to what extent cultural demand produces technological supply or, conversely, mechanical innovation promotes change in living practices, or decide whether our literary culture has been determined (dumbed down) by the prose of Stephen King or J.K. Rowling or whether we conjured them to speak for us. It is sufficient to assert that 19th- and 20th-century innovations – mass production, newspaper serialisation, expanding sales channels, pulp and so on – were the imaginative premise on which the contemporary novel was eventually written. It is sufficient to recognise that realism as the 'proper or preferred use of the novel' was historically contingent, a matter of social utility, of materiality (and that it has shifted somewhat, and may shift more dramatically still). It is sufficient to conclude, specifically, of *Harry Potter*, that its contemporary 'sensational' success is an ongoing function of cultural mythologising via genre, where the popularity of a preferred type of story speaks to its historical moment, easily read and easily translated, in 'language anybody can understand': a simple story of a (mostly) orphaned boy, moving between worlds, who in the course of his adventures / maturation, leaves the mundane behind and enters fully into the fantastic. Or, to put it back into the terms of Byatt's review: Byatt reads *Harry Potter* as a form of Freudian 'family romance', where

the unappreciated Harry 'invents a fairytale' of noble origin to escape his horrible 'real' family, the Dursleys; Rowling's ending, where Harry eventually outgrows both the Dursleys and the Muggle world suggests the contemporary reader may no longer need the 'security blanket' of a return to reality; or, indeed, to realism.

*   *   *

> Consumer society, media society, the 'society of the spectacle', late capitalism – whatever one wants to call this moment – is striking in its loss of a sense of the historical past and of historical futures. This incapacity to imagine historical difference – what Marcuse called the atrophy of the Utopian imagination – is a far more significant pathological symptom of late capitalism than features like 'narcissism'. [...] Science fiction is generally understood as the attempt to imagine unimaginable futures. But its deepest subject may in fact be our own historical present.
>
> **Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005: 345)**[65]

Perhaps a better question is not 'what if…' but 'what's next?' Although fantasy is routinely considered "the oldest of all the branches of imaginative literature" and science fiction merely a branch that considers the "extrapolations of the consequences of technological development" (Silverberg and Greenberg (eds.), 1997: 11, 10), the former may already be a literary movement that has lulled, a moment that has peaked. In his theorising of the popular music of the 21st century, Simon Reynolds reveals a decades-long trend towards 'retro' – a mode of recalling and replicating and recycling the relatively immediate past of pop culture[66] – of looking back to avoid moving forward. Is the current success of fantasy as a genre a modern appreciation of millennia-old storytelling or is it a somewhat sudden depreciative turn – a 'fire sale' – of the popular literature of the 20th century, a retro(active) act? Reynolds himself seems to glimpse but misperceive this possibility in literature:

> Just as the past has lost its lost-ness through digiculture's total access, similarly the future (and futurism, futuristic-ness) no longer has the charge it once did. [...] William Gibson's take on the young generation: they're not the least bit interested in the capital 'f' Future, barely ever think about it. The urge to escape the here-and-now, the bland suburban everyday, is as strong as ever, but it's satisfied through fantasy (the tremendous popularity of novels and movies based around magic, vampires, wizardry, the supernatural) or digital technology. (Reynolds, 2011: 425-426)

This seems back to front. Perhaps the popularisation of fantasy (and digital technology) says less about our escapist 'satisfaction' and more about the realisation of our anxieties – our global disconnectedness, our retinal detachment from a utopian vision. Concluding hundreds of pages of exemplification and exploration of 'retro' in contemporary music, Reynolds notes numerous attempts to more specifically express the mode or mood of the

contemporary, following Jameson's era-(re)defining *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). These include 'atemporality', from William Gibson and fellow author Bruce Sterling; Alan Kirby's 'digimodernism'; 'super-hybridity', a concept developed by the art magazine 'Frieze'; 'postproduction' and 'altermodernism', as per Nicolas Bourriaud; Alain Badiou's age of 'febrile sterility'; and Reynolds's own 'hyper-stasis' (Reynolds, 2011: 397-428). What is fascinating about these varied attempts – in their diversity and arguably their deficiency[67] in the traditional pursuit of 'naming the age'[68] – is how closely they still cleave to Jameson's 'Postmodern', describing an endless, overwhelming extension and exculpation of the present which is also an erasure of the weight or limit of the past.[69] Reynolds posits:

> This is one of the big questions of our era: can culture survive in conditions of limitlessness? Yet as much as the Internet's instant access overwhelms, it also presents opportunities. There are artists who are navigating the Web's choppy info-ocean and […] finding new possibilities for creativity. (ibid.: 77-78)

This is, similarly, the unspoken core of the gentle argument between Roth and McEwan in the introduction: the novel was already just one of a number of dominant narrative technologies in the 20th century; now we are looking at a new limit in the screens – in terms of access and availability, what stories are told and how, etc. What is missing from their debate, however, is the caveat that that limit won't be approached as screens versus books but through the endlessly rewritten pages of the internet. With Roth's Bradbury-esque anxieties and McEwan's contextualised acceptance in mind, it is important for us to approach our own moment critically. We seemingly stand atop 'the tower of eBabel' (Rothman, 2006), at a time of potent technological conversion, perhaps even a 'digital revolution' on the scale of the Industrial Revolution, but it is unrealistic to expect we can be assured of any particular outcome. One can always imagine possibilities but that is, on its own, a kind of fiction.

Here McEwan's wry aside on Roth – 'After me, the flood' – denotes the boundaries of our obvious temptation to perceive the events of our own lifetime as either foundational or a cataclysmic period of change in human history, and, in this way, Roth's concerns (and indeed *The Gutenberg Galaxy*'s visions of a changing human consciousness via the advent of printing) come into perspective as a resounding echo of the fifth book of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (wilfully mistranslated in English as *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*), wherein the antagonist Archdeacon Dom Claude Frollo observes: "This will kill that. The book will kill the edifice." (Hugo, 2009: n. pag.).[70] With this short statement, Frollo indicates that the printing press will destroy the authority of the Church (reason against faith, the literate individual against the established orthodoxy), and, more subtly and yet more specifically, that printing will supplant architecture as the aesthetic expression of humanity. Hugo, as narrator, goes on:

It was a presentiment that human thought, in changing its form, was about to change its mode of expression; that the dominant idea of each generation would no longer be written with the same matter, and in the same manner; that the book of stone, so solid and so durable, was about to make way for the book of paper, more solid and still more durable. (ibid.: n. pag.)

So, here we have the sense and significance of post-printing press literature, found in a line drawn from Hugo's awe (at a lost certainty that was written in stone) to Roth's qualms (a new uncertainty written in RAM). Indeed, awe is what is most apparent in Hugo's digressive observation – both amazement and trepidation – as he concludes his thoughts on the spread of literature with a mixed (Biblical) metaphor:

Undoubtedly this, too, is a structure, growing and piling itself up in endless spiral lines; here, too, there is confusion of tongues, incessant activity, indefatigable labour, a furious contest between the whole of mankind, an ark of refuge for the intelligence against another deluge, against another influx of barbarism. It is the second Tower of Babel. (Hugo, 2000: n. pag.)

The metaphors are telling (the ark is God's will, therefore righteous, while the tower is not, as it usurps God's omnipotence) – Hugo is aware of the potential of the technology but is afraid of the consequences.[71] The change in the technology promotes a change in the language, a change in the way of thinking, changes in culture, in the perception and use of time, in ways of being. Here we locate the imprecision in Roth's misgiving, for ereaders – which is to say also, really, the tablet, PDA, phone etc. (the new forms of the computer after the advent of the internet) – are not just screens but now function literally as portals for a collaborative experience that increasingly challenges or transcends the primacy of physical presence and performance.

This idea of the ereader+ebook as a transmutative technology, more than just a complex electronic tome, requires some historical context. As with the history of the printing press and the paper book, the twinned (entwined) technologies – deployment of the internet and the ebook – had numerous antecedents and are most easily described through their popularisation. In brief, it was a merging of communication needs with computing know-how: when '60s 'hypertext' as a philosophical and technological project piggybacked on the United States military's interest in communicating 'packets of data', therein lay the web – culminating circa 1990 at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research.[72]

By the time it reached CERN, DARPA (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the 'tech-heads' of the US armed forces) had officially relinquished their interest and thereafter, broadly speaking, the internet was shaped by the overlapping of both

communitarian projects and capitalist enterprises. Ebooks, likewise, derived from the technological development of internet archives / libraries[73] like Project Gutenberg (originated by Michael Hart in 1971, Project Gutenberg produces free ebooks of texts no longer covered by copyright laws) but have been more popularly experienced through the for-profit dissemination of ebooks by companies such as Amazon, Apple and, most recently, Google. These three companies in particular represent a significant challenge to the technologies and traditions of the book publishing industry, changing what kinds of 'books' are being written and how they are published, profited from and 'consumed'.[74]

In 1995, when Amazon started selling books online, this began to alter the real-world economic model of bookstores. First the independent bookstores began to close, then book-centric megastores (a phenomenon only a few decades old), such as those built by Borders, followed suit. This new online experience produced physical re-modellings too: changes to bookstore layouts to reflect demarcations of genre and cost, 'reimported' from online experiences in mountains of 'linked' 'if you liked this, read that' books or displays of 'books-by-price' or the occasional 'author biography' or 'staff recommendation' – 'value-adding' information, to which internet consumers are now almost oblivious. As it grew over the next decade, the internet as a sales channel (like railway or airport books, supermarket or megastore books etc.) affected what was being read, bought and written, but ebook technologies were not widely adopted until relatively cheap, dedicated ebook readers appeared with the first generation Amazon Kindle in 2007.

Apple, with its iPod hardware and iTunes software, a landmark integrated structure of personal device and mass marketplace, had led the field in the sale of digital music on the internet since 2003 (and video content and applications – or apps – thereafter) but had arguably failed to do the same for ebooks in the way that the Kindle and Kindle Store made possible. One key feature of ereaders, certainly from the Kindle onwards, was the use of electrophoretic ink (e-ink), a display technology designed to mimic the appearance of ordinary ink on paper. Although not a development on the scale of the integrated circuit or the microprocessor, e-ink helped readers transition to the idea of reading an ebook, as reading on other forms of computer screen were still considered to be too much of a strain on the eyes.

When it did finally arrive, Apple's popular innovation, if not outright invention[75], of a tablet computer – the iPad (2010) – provided an analogous challenge to the ereader that the printing of mass-circulation broadsheets would have posed to the early book printers (and on a much shorter timeline, obviously). The difference between a computer with which you could comfortably read books and a 'reader' with which you could do anything – consume or communicate any form of text – registered immediately in a price difference between the technologies (expanding the 2010 market for cheaper ereaders

like the Kobo). However, the iPad and its iBookstore app proved competitive in ebook sales, possibly because of the nuanced experiences they offered readers: iBooks originally offered three 'viewing themes' (normal, sepia, and night) and three 'page layouts' (book, full screen – with tapping and dragging to simulate page turning – and scroll, mimicking internet page reading), effectively covering all generations of readers and their reading habits. Subsequent versions have expanded choices even more effectively – a choice of languages, text size, font, screen brightness, and, most innovatively, word search, selection, definition and notation options – encouraging readers to go beyond 20th-century experiences of reading.

It is glib but essentially accurate to state that the appearance of the iPad 'rewrote' the market. In 2011, Amazon produced its own tablet computer, the Kindle Fire, as well as upgrading the 4th-generation Kindle to a touchscreen, and the Nook Simple Touch and Kobo Touch were also released. There has since been a twist, however (in a 20th-century genre-fiction kind of way). Google, the world's leading search engine and a pioneer in cloud computing (founded in 1998, publicly traded from 2004), entered the tablet market in 2012, partnering with Asus to create the Nexus 7 and with Samsung to create the larger-format Nexus 10, a move which would be relatively insignificant in the historical development of ebook technology, except for the as-yet-unprocessed impact of Google Books and Google Editions.

In 2003 Google began creating an archive of all books ever published (variously incarnated as Google Print, Google Print Library Project, and Google Book Search). At that early juncture in the history of the internet, the exact legality of such an act (in terms of copyright) was hazily understood. Google Books eventually emerged as a library-cum-database, a provider, freely available, of the entire text of books in the ever-increasing public domain, as well as a provider of a business service to publishers, copyright owners and booksellers who gave permission for a preview of their works to be made publicly available (paid back, so to speak, in the form of links to online sales channels[76]). Google also, however, provided consumers with a 'searchable' record – 'snippets', a few lines of text – of books whose publishers or copyright owners had either refused permission for the preview to be made available, or, more commonly, could not be found. In all cases Google retained the entire scanned copy of texts, even those they had no obvious legal right to. What was poorly understood at the time and perhaps even now were the implications of a company having harvested, fait accompli, the literature of the world, working in concert with many of the world's largest libraries (and fighting off or settling a number of copyright-related lawsuits from some of the largest publishing interests), then going into business as a seller of ebooks and ereaders.

This is of far greater significance than a capitalist enterprise (Google) merely outmanoeuvring its competitors (Amazon, Apple). It returns us instead to the question

Reynolds asked in relation to the fate of culture in the condition of approaching limitlessness. What cultural effects might arise from having the entire printed history of human culture instantly downloadable (or readable in 'the cloud') wherever you are in the world on a relatively cheap device and vastly, overwhelmingly, outside of copyright and therefore – data transfer costs aside – free? In particular, what effects might this have on the future development of literature, and, also, what effects might this arguably, eventually, have on literacy? Moreover, long-term, if Google are ever successful with their wearable 'Glass' hardware (glasses that hold lenses incorporating a computer screen), or perhaps their potential competitors, such as the Mark Zuckerberg-backed virtual-reality headset 'Oculus Rift' (Chafkin, 2015), will the increasingly efficient and combined technologies of search engines, online libraries, object recognition software and 'virtual reality' change the way we read everything, not just books?

These questions require an answer beyond the speculative but, at this 'early stage of the technology', there is some sense in finding a beginning, an entree, there – a 'first principles' of future narrative fiction founded not in its productions and processes, nor in its theoretical appreciation or apprehension, but seen simply as it appears in stories. This is hardly a definitive approach but Moore's history reminds readers, with its gleeful references to tales of the future thousands of years old, that the flipside to the coined expression 'there is nothing new under the sun' is that – as Borges and McLuhan could not fail to recollect – 'we are the ancients'[77]; our time in the sun, as it were, is governed in part by our understanding or lack of understanding of that. While new technology may make an implicit promise of new narrative, there are no guarantees how that promise will be kept; and, like the naming of an age, the revelation and regulation of future genre – just as fantasy has occupied / preoccupied the early 21st century – will be subject to the ongoing interpretative legitimation of subsequent generations (or, as Frank Kermode put it: "The pressure of reality on us is always varying […]: the fictions must change, or if they are fixed, the interpretations must change." (2000: 24)).

But what can speculative and fantastic fiction specifically tell us about technology, literacy and the future of genre that realistic narratives of the contemporary everyday might tend to overlook or ignore? In the case of a digital and wireless, internet-and-ebook-and-beyond, scenario, quite a bit. Most famously, Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (the 'trilogy' of five books published between 1979 and 1992, with a sixth novel penned by Eoin Colfer in 2009) imaginatively described the future tablet computer / interactive ebook in its titular Guide. By the end of the series, tellingly, the book is capable of generating its own 'construct' of reality.[78] Less well known now but even more startlingly prescient for our age of 'print on demand' was Stanislaw Lem's *Return from the Stars* (1961), a futuristic fairy-tale of a culture-shocked astronaut, returning to Earth after more than a hundred years in space:

Spent the afternoon in a bookstore. There were no books in it. None had been printed for nearly half a century. And how I had looked forward to them, after the microfilms that made up the library of the Prometheus! No such luck. No longer was it possible to browse among shelves, to weigh volumes in the hand, to feel their heft, the promise of ponderous reading. The bookstore resembled, instead, an electronic laboratory. The books were crystals with recorded contents. They could be read with the aid of an opton, which was similar to a book but had only one page between the covers. At a touch, successive pages of the text appeared on it. But optons were little used, the sales-robot told me. The public preferred lectons – lectons read out loud, they could be set to any voice, tempo, and modulation. Only scientific publications having a very limited distribution were still printed, on a plastic imitation paper. Thus all my purchases fitted into one pocket, though there must have been almost three hundred titles. A handful of crystal corn – my books. […] The robot that served me was itself an encyclopedia, in that – as it told me – it was linked directly, through electronic catalogues, to templates of every book on Earth. As a rule, a bookstore had only single 'copies' of books, and when someone needed a particular book, the content of the work was recorded in a crystal. The originals – crystomatrices – were not to be seen; they were kept behind pale blue enameled steel plates. So a book was printed, as it were, every time someone needed it. The question of printings, of their quantity, of their running out, had ceased to exist. Actually, a great achievement, and yet I regretted the passing of books. (Lem, 1989: 79-80)

Adams' and Lem's visions are innovative but not unique, simply the culmination of a train of thought (a matter transporter of cerebration, perhaps…) that alights at Mary Shelley (1826), Jules Verne (1863), E.M. Forster (1909), John Campbell (1934) and Isaac Asimov (1951) before them[79], and Lem (roughly simultaneous with the development of the integrated circuit) and Adams (roughly coincident with the advent of consumer – 'personal' – computers) mark two more stops. In all such stories, the death of novels, of fiction, of books, of literature and literacy, of imagination, of humanity-as-we-know-ourselves are inextricably bound together on the bonfire of a rapidly approaching judgement day (as depicted in Adams' books in the species of the Vogons, who decry independent thought; in Lem's book, it is humanity that is becoming 'thoughtless', losing touch with emotions, as with Bradbury, Campbell, Forster, Verne and so on). In all, each new medium produces new ways of reading (or not reading) and old narratives – especially fiction – are abandoned.

Structurally speaking, Adams' book (capable of generating its own construct of reality) in fact had its own nascent contemporaneous narrative equivalent in the '80s and '90s,

found in gamebooks (*Choose Your Own Adventure*, *Fighting Fantasy*, etc.). To play the game the young (YA target audience) reader would make choices in the text, which was divided and dictated by a succession of numbered paragraphs, and read the book according to the choices offered. There is no question that the popularity of these 'fantastic fiction' gamebooks – in the hundreds of millions – mirrored that generation's interest in the variable interactivity of computer game technology. It was, again, a new technology manifesting in an old format – and their popularity predictably waned in proportion to advancements in the computer game market and the expansion of the internet. It is also worth noting that, at the same time, technological 'experiments' in producing and promoting new forms of narrative – in the '80s, books published on CD-ROM and floppy disc, in the '90s, hypertext fiction on the internet – would fail to find a popular fiction market, although text-based computer games would succeed, thrive and evolve.

These gamebooks, for all their *Thousand and One Night* potential / pretension, lacked a commensurate development in their language and themes, which could instead be found percolating at the inventive margins of speculative fiction. Jean Baudrillard, for example, found it in the writings of J.G. Ballard, as posited in his 1991 essay 'Simulacra and Science Fiction':

> *Crash*, […] (even more than *High Rise* or *Concrete Island*) constitutes without doubt the contemporary model for this SF which is no longer SF. *Crash* is our world, nothing is really 'invented' therein, everything is hyper-functional: traffic and accidents, technology and death, sex and the camera eye. Everything is like a huge simulated and synchronous machine; an acceleration of our own models […] Fiction can go beyond reality (or inversely, which is more subtle), but according to the same rules of the game. But in *Crash*, there is neither fiction nor reality – a kind of hyperreality has abolished both. And therein lies the defining character, if there is one, of our contemporary SF. (Baudrillard, 1991)

In short, Baudrillard finds one future of narrative fiction abundantly inferred in a pronounced absence, the abandonment or abolishment of traditional SF themes of progress, or imagination as an engine for change. Jameson, reading Gibson, thereafter found another future corresponding to / representing an impossible frame of reference:

> [There…] is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature […] in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of

the normal reading mind. [...] It is in terms of that enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions that, in my opinion, the postmodern sublime can alone be adequately theorized. Such narratives, which first tried to find expression through the generic structure of the spy novel, have only recently crystallized in a new type of science fiction, called cyberpunk, which is fully as much an expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself: William Gibson's representational innovations, indeed, mark his work as an exceptional literary realization [...]. (Jameson, 1997: 36)

Ballard's futureless future-present and Gibson's depiction of our limited human engagement with the conditions of limitlessness make for extraordinary novels, and if they and their theorisation (Baudrillard / Jameson) seem a little dated a few decades on it is perhaps only by a matter of the degree to which our present has perhaps caught up to their future. In their successive works, though (see Jameson on Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*, 2005: 384-392; see also Reynolds, 2011: 396-397), Gibson and Jameson present us with another possibility. What if the longer we dwell within the 'global network', the less conspiratorial and paranoiac our reactions become, replacing them with an altered though no less critical literary mode, speculative tools turned to the coalface of 'the real'; what if "the clues point, not to some unimaginable reality in the social world, but to an (as yet) unimaginable aesthetic"? (Jameson, 2005: 388) It would be pointless, then or before, as Dougal McNeill points out (Milner et al. (eds.), 2006: 65, 66, 78) to maintain a false opposition between realism and science fiction: any conception of realism as a spent historical force obscures its use as a strategic operation to illuminate what, in fact, could have happened (in our reality) but didn't. To this end, the anticipation of 'speculative realism'[80] thus performs a double function. It works, to paraphrase Michael Jarvis, not only to show how 'the future is really the unacknowledged present', but also offers a line of defence to prevent 'the present becoming one with the unremembered past' (Jarvis, 2013).

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Cyberpunk was – in hindsight – the postmodern response in SF to the never-ending sense of an end heralded by waves of globalisation, corporatisation and invasively personalised technologisation, gathering at the end of the century. The fact that cyberpunk was almost immediately followed by steampunk, a fantasy offshoot that provided a pastoral / arcadian response to cyberpunk's airless, dystopian atmosphere, is however equally significant. For while they were timely and inventive, these literary ripostes were also not without precedent, as Roger Luckhurst describes in his seminal 1994 essay 'The Many Deaths of Science Fiction: A Polemic':

The history of SF is a history of ambivalent deaths. The many movements within the genre – the New Wave, feminist SF, cyberpunk – are marked as both transcendent death-as-births, finally demolishing the 'ghetto' walls, and as degenerescent birth-as-deaths, perverting the specificity of the genre. […] One can either view it positively as, paradoxically, the very motor of SF. But one can also suggest that […it is] produced out of the structure of legitimation, SF's perpetual deference to the criteria of worth elaborated for 'mainstream' literature. The death of the genre is the only way in which SF could survive as literature. (Luckhurst, 1994)

In this way, SF can equally be read as a microcosm(os) of the state of the novel as an entity / entirety, in that the cyclical experience of births, deaths and rebirths of form can also be observed or interpreted in a like manner. That is, only through a constant repetition of the death of the novel, of the threatened body of narrative representation, can it be revitalised, rewritten or translated through time. The necessary distinction is that SF was, predictably, the first genre to notice or, more correctly, fully imagine the looming shadow of a new and potentially transformative practice of literature.

CHAPTER THREE: 'SLOW FIRE':
THE DEATH AND REBOOT OF THE NOVEL

Austin Allen: Philip Roth says books are dying. Is he right?

Paul Auster: Philip has been talking like this for decades now and the fact is, he keeps writing books and people keep reading them. [...The] novel is such a flexible form. [...] You can do anything you want with it. It's just a story that you tell within the covers of the book. [...It's] constantly reinventing itself. And society continues to reinvent itself. Every historical moment needs [...] stories to be told about it.

Austin Allen and Paul Auster, *Big Think* (05/11/2009)

László Krasznahorkai: For [young people...], nothing has been decided yet. [...For them,] a book is not just a book; they know that while we hold on to the book forcefully, there is something before the book and something after the book, and that's what the book is for. [...But the] circumstances having changed, a completely transformed view of the world will be considered natural. I can imagine many possible scenarios, except that things will go on the way they are.

László Krasznahorkai, interviewed by Ágnes Dömötör (Péter Laki, trans.), *The Quarterly Conversation* (04/06/2012)

Once upon a time (and still, from time to time) the death of the novel was spoken of, and written about, to relate and reflect on fears of the death of a form – traditionally the 'high literature' of a period. As we have seen, these concerns are perennial, contextual, and appear therefore almost anachronistic; misplaced by being so specifically focused on that form, in that moment, they are signifiers of the opposite – the novel's continued relevance – even as they become beached, washing up on the tidal currents of literature. Whether 'death' is found at the sharp end of a 'new technology' (e.g. paperbacks) or its 'new mode' of storytelling (e.g. 20th-century genre fiction), new ways of writing and reading appear to revitalise the novel. As discussed, this is realised in the popularisation of new forms over time – it is a predictable outcome, even if we have mostly so far explored it in speculative terms.

Furthermore, without devolving to an overly conflated view of contemporary concerns over the 'death' of reading, of writing, of literacy, of literature and the novel format, of the production of books written on paper or the future of books as we know them, the common-sense view is that they are all connected by our practices and production. The other commonplace is that ebooks, like the post-15th-century printed book, the rotary-printed mass-produced 19th-century book, the 20th-century paperback, and so on, will become ubiquitous in short order but changes to the novel form and its accompanying anxieties will, likewise, take time to develop and re-order themselves. One potential signpost for contextualising these developments is the late 20th-century concern with what was colloquially known as 'slow fire' – the environmental degradation of books, specifically those produced in the 19th and early-mid 20th century, before the proliferation

and uptake of acid-free paper, which made them yellow, fade, fall apart and eventually completely disintegrate.

The term was a technical one, if somewhat romantically posed, popularised by the 1987 documentary film on the subject by Terry Sanders, *Slow Fires: On The Preservation Of The Human Record*. Fears over the disappearance of books led to widespread de-acidification attempts and a shift to acid-free paper, along with feverish attempts to protectively reproduce texts in other forms such as microfilm. This process was controversial; in the US, for example, nearly a million paper books were destroyed in the attempt (Baker, 2001; Kakutani, 2001). Whether these fears were exaggerated, however, or have been rendered moot by digitalisation, 'slow fire' – as a metaphor – neatly encapsulates our practice / production anxieties. This idea of unsustainability, a slow slide into destruction, is still particularly potent when we consider some of its 21st-century manifestations, specifically reading 'the death of the novel' (i) through our environmental apprehensions, and (ii) via the cultural impact of the new technology, and (iii) in the problem of illiteracy.

The first is straightforward: where slow fire once meant the death of books from their production and environment, now it is inverted – our books are symptomatic of what's killing us.[81] The production of paper and pulp contributes substantial pollution to the environment and while the novel itself represents only a small fraction of the books produced globally, and books a small fraction of paper used, its imagined or symbolic significance is far greater. When people talk or write about the death of the book, there is no sense that they are concerned with phonebooks or even textbooks; the transition of that knowledge to a digital medium is well underway. Novels, on the other hand, the children of our imagination, invoke a far more protective, parental hand. Despite their statistically insignificant impact on the environment, therefore, the perceived inevitability of having to change tack to protect our planet makes the transition of novels to ebooks seem contentious.

The details are as desperate as they are draining. Regarding books, there are concerns over the huge energy consumption from paper and pulp mills, matched with their capacity for industrial pollution in our air and water and landfill from production and waste – particularly pulping, bleaching and deinking – and the effects of deforestation and the controversial growth of 'renewable' plantation 'forests'.[82] However, there is also great trepidation over the damage ereaders will also cause in their proliferation. The costs, social and environmental, of producing the raw materials (viz. mining) and manufacturing them, the increased energy consumption from reading them and attendant pollution from energy production, the impact of ereader disposal, given the structured obsolescence of ereaders vs. paper books (even those supposedly succumbing to slow fire) – these are estimated to have "increased the environmental impact of

reading by tenfold" (Genoways, 2010), not to mention foreshortened and diminished the lives of untold people through pollution and exploitation (Goleman and Norris, 2010; Moran, 2012).

All of which is messy and fraught – the state of the environment is a 'life and death' issue; what makes the issue clearer here is that, firstly, as noted, novels are only 'a tiny part of a huge problem' and, secondly, regretfully, while the practice of using dedicated ereaders (or reading ebooks on some other electronic device) continues to expand and diversify – their environmental impact, however damaging, is not well-understood enough at this point to impede their technological uptake. The cultural impact, though, in the form of 'new' narrative, is already dimly observable in the outliers of production and consumption in literature, and entails more extensive consideration, especially of how it is exemplified in publishers, 'platforms' and reader participation. To this end, three 21st-century phenomena are of note: changes to the publishing industry as seen in the case of the 'romance' publisher Harlequin, Japanese and African innovations in the use of mobile phones to 'tell stories', and new 'shared worlds' arising from the interface between fiction and technology.

The first constructive case study is Harlequin (home of the 'bodice-rippers' beloved of cultural studies), perhaps the best-adapted / adoptive, most prescient, major publisher of recent years in terms of reach, cultural translation and technological aptitude. For the last two decades their evolving business model has proven remarkably farsighted. In 1998, Harlequin began selling their books directly from websites; they also licensed their fictions to the Ohzora Publishing Company in Japan, translating their works into over 250 manga titles. Two years later, they created their own online community for readers, eHarlequin.com. This was followed in 2005 by the creation of Torstar Digital to further coordinate their digital strategies and launch them into the ebook market; in the same year, the Ohzora manga were then recirculated globally, republished in English by Dark Horse Comics. In 2007, Harlequin became the first major North American publisher to publish 100% of its 'front list' titles as ebooks, and since 2008 they have been publishing digital-first (later published in print – that is, to be clear, on paper) and digital-exclusive content; they also made a deal with SoftBank Creative, a cell-phone provider in Japan to publish 1,000 Harlequin manga on cell phones and internet distribution sites.[83] In 2009, their digital programming finally 'came of age' in 'Carina', their digital-exclusive imprint. *The Washington Post Book World* podcast (Shea and Charles, 13/11/2009) quoted Donna Hayes, the publisher of Harlequin Enterprises, as saying:

> This definitely gives us greater flexibility in the type of editorial we can accept from authors and offer to readers. As well, we hope to reach a new group of readers with niche editorial.

Ron Charles, the fiction editor for *The Washington Post* commented:

> That seemed to suggest that this web-only imprint will allow Harlequin to experiment with new forms, short stories, even choose-your-own adventures, and possibly new genres; and they're currently looking for writers – no previous experience necessary.

Two aspects of Harlequin's decade-long strategy led global digital trends. The first was the new market for diversely structured works. 'Niche editorial' here included approaches such as Harlequin Digital First's 'Your Brilliant Idea': "Authors have always been the innovators in publishing. […] Do you have a burning idea that keeps you up at night, but there has been no market for it? Now is the time to submit as we commit to the freedom to experiment in digital publishing." (Harlequin, 2014) and 'Harlequin Pop!', critical nonfiction writing on popular culture (Harlequin, 2013). The second was the new model for the recruitment of preferred future writers of fiction (no advance, royalty-based and tiered payments, 'publish-on-spec' or even 'pay-to-publish').

In 2013, Carina took the next step – DRM-free – and, here, Harlequin instantly became exemplary market leaders amongst the major publishers. In an interview with Erin Shea, Head of Adult Programming at Darien Library in Connecticut (a truly 21st-century job title), Angela James, Executive Director and Editorial Editor of Carina, stated:

> Carina Press has chosen not to put DRM, or Digital Rights Management [a digital lock], on our titles, including those bought by libraries. This means library users can easily move the files they check out from the library to their device of choice. […] Anecdotally, I've heard many nonfiction publishers, especially textbook publishers, say DRM free is a nonstarter in their part of the industry. […] On the fiction side, I think some of the hesitation from publishers comes not just from the publishers and their concerns with reader usage of DRM-free material, but also from the pressure they get from some authors and agents to continue the use of DRM […]. I do see it as a way to build word of mouth. […With] the rise of digital and the rise of the reader also being online, we're seeing how important word of mouth along with the right pricing strategy is. (McCormack, 2013)

Carina was followed in this by Tor, the SF-imprint of Pan MacMillan, in 2012 and smaller digital-first and digital-only publishers and imprints have also been adopting it; in Australia, for example, Harlequin-imprint Escape Publishing and Pan MacMillan's Momentum Books have both done so. While DRM-free is unlikely to become the industry standard any time soon, the fact that it is proving practicable at smaller publishers is an

interesting development (see Greenfield, 2012c; Wischenbart, 2016: 183-184), although it is no surprise that romance and SF – pulp – readers are at the heart of it.

Turning to a broader case study, the digital and platform changes taking place in the Japanese book and ebook market in the new century have perhaps even more significant ramifications than those at Harlequin. Five trends, in particular, are worth discussing. The first is historical – the post-WWII explosion in manga: Japanese comics, cartoon books. This common understanding of them is, however, problematically Western, lacking the historically empathetic context of their widespread consumption in post-War Japanese culture. With a Western eye, their popularity is akin to 'pulp' but even more so – a new popular form (whether one reads it as escapism from a culture under occupation or a conscious break with tradition, it is a quintessentially Japanese art). As seen with Harlequin, as manga and anime (Japanese cartoon animations) have circulated internationally, it has had a massive and ongoing influence on innumerable (trans)cultural narratives; notwithstanding its influential example as a pictographic or iconographic form of a potential experience of the-future-novel, so far, so obvious.

The second trend is less well known. In Japan, 'light novels' are currently popular ('raito noberu' or 'ranobe'; as you can see, phonetically, the term 'raito noberu' is the English words 'light novel' re-coined in Japanese; Clegg, 2013). Alike in length to the Western novella, in style – not content, necessarily – even more akin to pulp, they are usually stories published serially in manga or magazines subsequently republished as 'novels' (often in the 'bunkobon' / 'bunkoban' or A6 format, smaller than the majority of Western paperbacks; Morita, 2014; Ross, 2015). Their attraction for readers lies, in part, in their evocation of more simplistic or 'light' language than traditional Japanese novels (for a generation raised on manga, finding the linguistic and thematic equivalent of Western YA fiction makes sense), whereas their attraction for publishers is their ubiquity and multidimensionality – light novels can be about anything and everything. The novella size proves a 'pan-entertainment' bridge between formats and genres, linking or rewriting other novels and novel series, movies and television shows, manga, anime, real-life events, and even online communities and subcultures – translating between them (Takatsu and Miyamoto, 2011).

Alongside the changing values in how adult readers of novels view integrated-illustrated content and serial and novella structures, the third trend – cell phone novels, or 'keitai shōsetsu'[84] – not only demonstrates a radical alternative to the traditional novel structure and reading practice but also provides a differing model for their sale, namely 'free vs. subscription'.[85] While it might be difficult for people outside of Japan to understand the popularity of these novels they were for a time an extraordinary cultural phenomenon:

> [At its height in 2006-2007, five of the ten] best-selling novels […] were originally mobile phone novels, mostly love stories written in the short sentences characteristic of text messaging but containing little of the plotting or character development found in traditional novels. What is more, the top three spots were occupied by first-time mobile phone novelists […]. (Onishi, 2008)

This led, predictably, to the literary journal *Bungaku-kai* posing the question on its cover – 'Will cell phone novels kill 'the author'?' (ibid.). Putting such anxieties aside, what they are and how they are read requires some explanation. Cell phone novels are written and read serially as texts to and sometimes even from other mobile phones – books read 70-100 words at a time (*Japan Today*, 2012). The novels are often in continuous streams, uploaded from the writers' phones or computers to websites and then downloaded by readers. These readers (with a high percentage being young women reading what we would nominally call 'romances') provide feedback and encouragement to the authors – electronic requests and recommendations forming a direct and immediate 'collaborative authorship'. This collaborative authorship stands as a trend in itself, although it is increasingly a global trend through the technology of social media. As for economics:

> [Most mobile] phone writers are not paid for their work, no matter how many millions of times their novels might be read online. The pay-off, if any, comes when the novels are reproduced and sold as traditional books. Readers have free access to the web-sites that carry the novels, or pay [a subscription fee]. (Onishi, 2008)

Here, the economic model parallels the burgeoning self-published ebook market of the last few years in the West, as well as the new fiction-by-subscription model arising in 2013 with companies like Scribd (JBPA, 2012: ch. 8).[86] For a monthly subscription fee (with the incentive of a free trial), readers can access hundreds of thousands of ebooks, including those of major publishers, in a model originated by music-sharing-by-subscription websites, e.g. Spotify, and movie-sharing-by-subscription websites, e.g. Netflix. Individual titles can also be bought and kept – although, presumably, not shared between users.

Despite reads / readers in the millions, sales of reprints in the hundreds of thousands, television, movie and manga adaptations, there is no sense that 'keitai shōsetsu' are growing in popularity, either in Japan or globally. Various attempts to export the genre to Europe, North America and Africa have met with mixed results. Their leading proponent in the US, Takatsu Lee, only has roughly 70,000 reads of his most popular novel (*Secondhand Memories*, at textnovel.com); by comparison, the 'pilot program' of the Yoza Project (2009-2013; originally known as m4Lit – mobile phones for literacy), which

explored the viability of using mobile phones to support reading and writing in South Africa and throughout the 'book-poor, mobile-phone-rich' developing world had around four times that number of 'story reads'. This is probably because, as Yoza founder Steve Vosloo argued: "[for] the foreseeable future, the cellphone, not the Kindle or iPad, is the e-reader of Africa" (SAinfo, 2010).[87] According to documents on their website, Yoza stories published through Worldreader, a non-profit organisation that distributes ereaders and ebooks to combat illiteracy, reached half a million readers in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and India (Vosloo, 2012; Vosloo, 2013); and, certainly, this approach has more room to grow – the Worldreader Mobile App, which provides a smart-phone-ereader interface on low-end-feature phones, is active throughout Asia, Africa and increasingly globally: their website reports 4 million readers in 53 countries reading 40,000 books in 43 languages.

The success of 'keitai shōsetsu' in Japan or m-novels in Africa reflects the technological literacy and access (mobile phones and the internet) of their changing demographics and predictably raises concerns with more traditional literacy – as registered in criticism of the novels, particularly in Japan. It is a confluence that mirrors the history of serialisation in the West, being both a product of technology ("a development having nothing to do with culture or novels but by [the] mobile phone companies' decision to offer unlimited transmission of packet data, such as text-messaging, as part of flat monthly rates"; Onishi, 2008) and the specific, in this case millennial, culture – young people writing emotionally expressive or socially taboo stories in simple language, to be read in ways and at a pace that suits their 'lifestyle':

> Talking on the phone in many contexts is frowned upon, so people tend to make use of text messaging and emoticons to have lively conversations. This is cheaper than phone service, and especially pronounced among the young […]. Reading often takes place in crowded trains during long commutes. The works are published in […] abbreviated chapters that are the ideal length to be read between shorter train stops. This means that, despite small cell phone screens, lots of white space is left for ease of reading. Multiple short lines of compressed sentences, mostly composed of fragmentary dialogue, are strung together with lots of cell phone-only symbols. The resulting works are emotional, fast-paced and highly visual, with an impact not unlike manga. (Galbraith, 2009)

In some ways it also reflects the failure of Japanese ereader manufacturers to provide young people with their own literature. Until recently, the market had been uninspired: in an protectionist move, the Japanese Government had funded and promoted a proprietary file format (XDMF) in collaboration with Sharp; however, their ereader 'Galapagos' failed to shift units (Sony, Toshiba and Panasonic had little success either) probably due to a

limited number of non-manga ebooks being made available: estimates were around 100,000 compared to the 1,000,000 ebooks sold by Amazon (Kamata, 2011; Birtle, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Einhorn, 2012). With the development of ePub 3.0 software in 2011, more ereaders – Kobo, iPad, Kindle, Nexus et al. – can now display Japanese text, vertically, properly, whereas previous ePubs ("open-standard software for digital readers developed by the International Digital Publishing Forum, an electronic publishing trade group"; Einhorn, 2012) struggled with non-Western formatting, also affecting manga layouts etc. In summary, the fourth trend may be a mixed market, smaller numbers of more diversified media – manga, cell phone novels, light novels, more traditional ebook novels – in a globally expanded competitive emporium.[88]

Finally, what is essential to understanding the full impact of the m-novel / 'keitai shōsetsu' trend is not just that serial publication provokes or provides for reader feedback and a variant narrative structure (e.g. devices such as 'cliffhangers', 'spontaneous' plotting, focused prioritising of dialogue, action or character; lessons as old as Dickens) or that a smaller screen inevitably incorporates shorter sentence structures or terse prose ('txtspk' being a harbinger in the evolution of language in our technologically-adapted future). It is by having the story arrive at their phone – as a text message, effectively – that the reader is real-time implicated in the story in a participatory and collaborative way that is different to other devices, a blurred evolution from imagining a relationship to the book to feeling like the ebook is actually being written for you, as you read it (Park and Lee, 2013). Still, there we have the fifth trend – that language changes (that is, languages change) and there is an inevitability that in globalised societies this will have an effect on how they communicate, how they (self-)represent in narrative; in, if they survive, novels. The timeframe on such changes has historically been so gradual that it provokes nothing more than generational grumbling (the 'bad' language of romance novels or pulp, *Harry Potter* or *Twilight*, 'raito noberu' or 'keitai shōsetsu') but 21st-century interconnectedness could prove otherwise.

Moving away from Japan as a case study, this trend may also eventually appear in the preformed / preformatted guise of other social media and, it follows, diverse ways of organising and experiencing information could arguably produce different approaches to narrative. Twitter novels and novellas, for example, already exist – former *Punk Planet* editor Dan Sinker's *The F***ing Epic Twitter Quest of @MayorEmanuel* (2011) and filmmaker Steven Soderbergh's *Glue* (2013), for instance – as do novels written on Facebook – but while some of them are very good, none of them is ongoing or massively popular (Madrigal, 2011; Scott, 2013). Furthermore, while utilising social media programs, applications and platforms might provide an impetus for creating alternate forms of content (perhaps storytelling on YouTube, or by integrating text, illustrations, images,

links or animations using platforms like Tumblr, Instagram or Flickr), there is no existing zeitgeist – no momentum – beyond authors experimenting with form.

Apps and platforms, though, are in place to encourage people to self-publish their own novels and short stories; in fact, Amazon has, among others (Barnes & Noble's 'Nook Press', Apple's iBooks, Smashwords), gone to great lengths to provide their own monetised self-publishing-house / platform, called 'CreateSpace'. This extension of 'vanity publishing' may ultimately prove a new sales channel – to some extent, for some; e.g. *Fifty Shades* – but it has, to date, had limited effect on the novel form; notwithstanding the impact of an arguable decline in editing and, again, only in the limited oeuvre of the self-published (see, for detail, Sherman Young in Potts (ed.), 2014: 37-42; Wischenbart, 2016: 174-175).

That said, it is perhaps right on the cusp, for among the success stories of the self-published and a handful of other authors embracing – or at least facing up to – the new technology, we can see a final outlier exemplification of a new novel and its social impacts: 'shared worlds'. Collaborative novels, with multiple authors writing common settings, common characters, and often, though not uniformly, in a common style or tone, while most typically found in genre fiction (fantasy, SF, comic books), are, perhaps surprisingly, relatively commonplace elsewhere; being a curious mix of authorial collegiality and the financial model of the franchise.[89] What is new in the models being produced in the initial ebook era are the assumptions made by creative participants and how they circumvent or co-opt the traditional publishing industry. Three in particular are of interest: thriller writer J.A. Konrath's *Jack Daniels* stories, Dmitry Glukhovsky's *Metro 2033* 'universe' and Eric Flint of Baen Books *1632* alternate-history series.

Konrath, who had previously published his *JD* novels through Hyperion, became aware of the Kindle in 2009 and shifted to self-publishing through Amazon. An increase in sales, profits and readers led Konrath to another decision, which was to open his 'world' to other authors, eventually 'folding in' a major collaboration with author Blake Crouch; taking Crouch's pre-existing *Luther Kite* series, the two authors overlaid each other's settings and characters. This, in 2013, mutated into a James-Patterson-style collaboration franchise – anyone who wanted to try and write in Konrath's world or with his characters could now submit files to him for editing and rewriting and then split the profits 50/50. Within a few months, Konrath had epublished three novellas (*Jacked Up!* with Tracy Sharp, *Straight Up* with Iain Rob Wright and *Racked* with Jude Hardin), followed by six more in 2014-2015; a publishing schedule that would be impossible under print conditions.[90] He commented on his blog (30/10/2013):

> The final result, after doing this for a year, will be unique to the publishing
> world. There will be, literally, a minimum of thirty different writers' universes

all linked through me. The hundreds of thousands of Jack Daniels fans will not only get more Jack Daniels, but they'll have dozens of new series to try. But it's not just a linear progression. It's more like a woven tapestry. [...] Every new collaboration is another chance for readers to discover dozens of authors who write the kinds of things they like. (Konrath, 2013a)

Russian author Dmitry Glukhovsky was turned down by publishers for his post-apocalyptic novel set in the underground train tunnels of Moscow, *Metro 2033*, so he self-published it on the internet in 2002. Interest grew, as more and more people read it, resulting in a traditional publishing deal with Eksmo in 2005, selling two million copies in 20 countries and translations in 37 languages (including an English translation in 2010). He followed it with a popular sequel, *Metro 2034*, which was also made available for free on the internet, and the stories spawned computer and board games and are now being developed by MGM for a movie version. Like Konrath, Glukhovsky's eventual decision to open his 'world' has produced far more interesting dividends: the Russian-language website for the books lists over 50 sequels, mostly by other authors, and stories set all over the globe.[91] In an interview with Adam Rosenberg for the gaming website Digital Trends, Glukhovsky noted:

I think it's not interesting if I tell everything. So instead, I offer [...] writers, both professional and beginners, [the opportunity to] write their own story set in their hometowns, their home cities [...]. The idea is, it's a text. It's a living creature [...and] it can now go through transformations and live a life of its own. (Rosenberg, 2013)

The allure of these worlds, connecting professional authors to people writing, effectively, fan fiction but harnessing a workable economic model is palpable. Eric Flint's series *1632*, about a small West Virginian town translocated through space and time to Thuringia in Germany during the Thirty Years' War, is different only by a matter of degree. Flint, who turned 50 before he published his first novel, also thereafter became an editor at Baen Books, a publisher focusing primarily on SF and fantasy. Baen developed its own free ebook 'library' in 1999, a successful strategy to promote and circulate books by its authors; all Baen ebooks are DRM-free. His novel *1632* (2000), like *Metro 2033*, was taken up by a community of readers on the Baen website, who not only created their own fan fiction but also participated in online discussions about technical aspects of the world – these writings would inspire and form the basis for a complicated series of collaborative publications – primarily collaborative novels in the series, such as *1633* (2002) and, to date, 19 other novels, anthologies including the first *Ring Of Fire* anthology (2004), followed by others in 2008 and 2011, and a 'paid' periodical called *The Grantville Gazette*, which published versions of fan fiction stories and technical essays, edited by Flint, first as ebooks then republished in print (2004). There are currently over 60 volumes of material

and a number of the stories serialised in the 'gazettes' are also republished as separate ebooks through Amazon. In this way, everything in the 'world' remained canonical – written, collaborated on or edited by Flint – and everyone who participated was paid (although Flint retains the rights to the series and characters).[92]

Relatively cheaply published and purchased, in a market-driven mixture of digital and print, and available in vast quantities to readerships directly connected with the authors, these 'shared world' novels set a standard and define a nascent trend that can also be identified, more broadly, throughout publishing. The author Cory Doctorow, for example, publishes all his books both in print and freely available to download and read via the internet both on his own website and on the platform 'Wattpad'. Doctorow also allows readers, via Creative Commons licensing, to create derivative works – fan fiction or otherwise – from the material (his 2003 novel *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* was the first ever to be issued with a CC license).[93]

Margaret Atwood, too, recently began publishing – somewhat experimentally; not atypically – both free and paid serialised fiction; for free, *The Happy Zombie Sunrise Home* (2012-2013), co-written with Naomi Alderman and published on Wattpad, and paid – by subscription to *Byliner* or as an Amazon download, chapter by chapter, as they were written – *Positron* (2012-2013; novel, 2015).[94] Atwood, like Konrath, is indicative of a trend towards serialisation (the sale of shorter works, ongoing; see also Garber, 2016) but even more specifically, if you look at Wattpad, you see the trend, as with *1632*, of community participation through commentary. This is clearly a feature of the platform: like the m-novels, Wattpad stories, including a huge number of actual novels, can be read on laptop or phone, provide ample space for interaction with authors and provide instant notifications and updates of ongoing serials; the fact that there is an entire category / genre dedicated to fan fiction novels is illustrative of that broader trend. Furthermore, this movement is circulating within the publishing world – Sourcebooks is releasing online editions to digitally market-test books and incorporate reader feedback before they hit print, similar to what Scholastic did with their best-selling *39 Clues* series, taking their cues from message boards they created for their fans (Alter, 2012).

There are a number of other authors engaging with the changing ebook and digital market, more and more as time passes, but one other author's collaboration stands out as a final exemplar of the developing tendencies – Neal Stephenson. Best described as a writer of speculative fiction (although, arguably, so are Doctorow and Atwood, and such, with a broad enough mind, is the point of all fiction), Stephenson has some history of collaboration but in his project *The Mongoliad* he has gone further than any of the other authors previously mentioned. In 2010, Stephenson, along with fellow writers Greg Bear and Mark Teppo and art directors / game developers Karen Laur and Gabe Newell of Valve Software and Forterra Systems, partnered with entertainment company Kennedy

Marshall and Jeff Bezos' investment company to found the Subutai Corporation (named after Genghis Khan's strategic commander; Stephenson is the chairman). The company was formed to create media franchises – in their words: "We start with story, and then we build a world" (Subutai Corporation, 2016a) – and their first project was *The Mongoliad* (2010-2012; and, technically, ongoing in their new re-categorisation of the project, *The Foreworld*), "a community-driven, enhanced, serial novel" read on browser, phone or tablet, "set in the year 1241 CE when Europe thought that the Mongol Horde was about to completely destroy their world […]." (Subutai Corporation, 2013)[95] Upon its release at the SF App Show in 2010, it was described as 'an experiment in post-book story-telling', which cleverly utilised the input of visual artists, programmers, martial artists, film-makers, game designers and, eventually, fans as well, "to produce an ongoing stream of nontextual, para-narrative, and extra-narrative stuff […to bring] the story to life in ways that are pleasingly unique, and which can't be done in any single medium." (Anders, 2010)

This meant that alongside the almost sixty chapters of the work (eventually split into three books / ebooks for publication) there were also maps, illustrations, portraits, and videos (introductions of chapters, interviews with the creative team, commentaries, historical background, how-to demonstrations and so on). Paid subscriptions helped fund the experiment ($49.99 for 'lifetime' access) and content was produced not only in the main narrative but in novella-length 'Side Quests' and in fan-fiction stories uploaded to the platform as well (Subutai Corporation, 2012a, 2012b). Many of these extra novellas were eventually released in ebook and audiobook derivations and in 2013 they began augmenting those with serial comics and new novels in the 'world', 'author-ised' but not authored by Stephenson or Bear. A number of the fan-fiction stories were, likewise, rendered for sale in 2013, this time through Amazon's Kindle Worlds. Responding to the growing trend in fan-fiction writing (otherwise freely available throughout the internet on fan-sites like FanFiction and Archive of Our Own or platforms like Wattpad), Amazon monetised it by creating a publishing platform which would allow fans to write stories set in their preferred – but copyrighted and corporately-owned – worlds, and split the profits. Currently available worlds include TV properties, such as *Gossip Girl*, *Veronica Mars*, *G.I. Joe* and *The Vampire Diaries*, eauthor 'success stories' like Hugh Howey's *Silo Saga*, comic books such as Valiant Comics *X-O Manowar* and *Harbinger*, *The Foreworld*, and also, bizarrely, 'The World of Kurt Vonnegut', wherein you can read novellas including *The World of Kurt Vonnegut: The War Widow's Shower*, a licensed piece of *Slaughterhouse-Five* erotica.[96]

None of this reflects, necessarily, on Stephenson's experiment – it is still on the same playing field, if arguably in a different league, than the worlds of *1632* or *Jack Daniels*. The possibilities of restructuring the novel (of how we read narrative) that are suggested by it,

though, are on a vastly different scale, as they relate to that other epidemic of 'slow fire', raised at the beginning of this chapter – illiteracy. Literacy, commonly understood, is the ability to read and write (and literature – the ultimate textual product of that ability). This definition, however, is historically contingent, overly simplistic and culturally problematic; literacy is better represented as a spectrum of practices, of which reading literature has traditionally been a tiny subset. It is, however, the same metric presumed when people complain about the use of 'txtspk' or the simplistic language of popular fiction as when they measure whether someone can write their own name or read basic instructions. Concerns in 'developed' countries and cultures over a 'decline in literacy' due to a perceived changing valuation of grammar or spelling, a decrease in the number of people reading novels, an increase in the number of people reading 'bad' novels or an increase in the number of people spending time using any media that doesn't prioritise text (such examples prompting most instances of 'the death of the novel' or 'the death of reading' over the last century) requires, at least, some scathing contextualisation; not that there's nothing to worry about but that 'full literacy', if that simply means an ability to read and write, is insufficiently explicative.[97]

It was to remedy this limitation (and the consequences of that misapprehension) that UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, through its Institute for Statistics, formally implemented its Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) in 2003. To illustrate their development, they listed examples of their own history of dealing with literacy / illiteracy issues:

> (i) A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life (UNESCO, 1958);

> (ii) A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development (UNESCO, 1978);

> (iii) Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society (benchmark set in 2003 and published in UNESCO, 2005); and

> (iv) Finally, the notion of 'plurality of literacy' (2004) was advanced to stress the social dimensions of literacy in relation to both acquisition and

application. Therefore, literacy is seen as comprising diverse practices embedded in socio-economic, political, cultural and linguistic contexts […]. It also involves family and community contexts; the media in various forms of technology […]; and the world of work and life in general. Thus, this concept of literacy emphasises the literacy challenge as making societies literate and not simply as making individuals literate (UNESCO, 2004). (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, hereafter UIS, 2009: 13-14)

From 'reading and writing' to 'functional literacy' to a 'continuum of learning' to 'plurality' marks a key shift from simply monitoring or improving an individual's ability to recognising the specific impacts literacy practices have: 'the development of active citizenship' (and political empowerment), for example, or 'improved health and livelihoods' (minimising the spread of diseases, alleviating poverty), promoting 'gender equality' and the intergenerational benefits of teaching 'adult literacy'; for families and across communities, societies and globally (ibid.: 14, 16; AAI and GCE, 2005: 1-2). This shift is vital when interpreting what illiteracy means in countries or cultures which are considered to have high (or 'near universal') literacy, just as much as in those areas of Asia and Africa where illiteracy is concentrated:

[There] are 740 million illiterate people in this world and 250 million children of primary school age lack basic reading and writing skills (UNESCO). This is often due to the fact that people in many parts of the world have access to a vanishingly small range of books. In fact, 50 percent of schools in sub-Saharan Africa have few or no books (SACMEQ II), slowing learning and societal advancement.[98] (WorldReader, 2014)

And throughout the world, rates of literacy are lower for women than for men: two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women. South Asia has the highest rates of illiteracy; there, almost 60 percent of women are illiterate. (Jack, 2012: 289; see also UIS, 2010, 2013b)

The point is the problem of illiteracy is not simply two-tiered: massive illiteracy / inequality in 'developing countries' (so-called; Hoggart, 1978: 22), requiring considerable empowerment and redistribution of resources, as compared to minor illiteracy / inequality in 'developed countries', requiring relatively minor adjustments.[99] Rather, the problem hinges on the question of 'what is literacy for?' and is thus applicable to all countries and all cultures – as such, the question is not a relative one but fundamental. In fact, literature might only be a glorious by-product of the practices of literacy, swelled historically in some places (countries, cultures) to near universality by the demands of the industrial revolution and the supply of democracy. Slow fire, in this scenario, is not the real (if still somewhat unrealised) impact of humans on our environment, nor the

unnerving social changes reflected in our stories as we restructure them – and how we think and feel about them – but the recognition that even as we grind away at illiteracy we may, to take a page from Bradbury and Orwell, lose our place anyway. Orwell wrote in *Inside the Whale* (1940):

> Almost certainly we are moving into an age of totalitarian dictatorships […where] literature, in the form in which we know it, must suffer at least a temporary death. […] As for the writer, he is sitting on a melting iceberg; he is merely an anachronism, a hangover from the bourgeois age, as surely doomed as the hippopotamus. (1966: 48)

Seemingly a misnomer, the presumed fate of the hippopotamus – threatened but not extinct – still offers room for rumination. Following on, chronologically-speaking, Orwell wrote in 'The Prevention of Literature' (1946), à la Bradbury, how in a totalitarian society writers would ultimately self-censor and that what he feared in totalitarianism also existed, muted or mutated, in contemporary, democratic society. Orwell continued:

> In the future it is possible that a new kind of literature, not involving individual feeling or truthful observation, may arise, but no such thing is at present imaginable. […On the other hand, apart] from newspapers it is doubtful even now whether the great mass of people in the industrialized countries feel the need for any kind of literature.[100] […] Probably novels and stories will be completely superseded by film and radio productions. Or perhaps some kind of low-grade sensational fiction will survive, produced by a sort of conveyor-belt process that reduces human initiative to the minimum. It would probably not be beyond human ingenuity to write books by machinery. (Orwell, 1966: 171)

Looking beyond the specific concerns of his historical moment, Orwell points towards the possibility of two overlapping fears – literacy without literature or literature without literacy. There is, unwittingly, a now-obvious leap between the 'low-grade sensational fiction' (say, perhaps unfairly, *Twilight* or *Fifty Shades Of Grey*) and books actually written by machinery (say, perhaps prematurely, Philip M. Parker's books-by-algorithm); even if Orwell had correctly predicted the specific technological changes that have taken place (as opposed to the 'versificator', the mechanical music-making device in *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* or the proletarian pornography made by 'Pornosec'; Orwell, 1993: 46), their impact, if Parker's boasts can be believed, may be more horrifying, more inhuman, than even Orwell feared. Still, one last 'what if' – even though literature may not actually be the point of literacy, what if slow-fire literacy could itself be reinvigorated, restored, by literature? What if books written by machines could themselves embody human ingenuity?

Fiction in its low sense [can…] mean an easily-gratifying truth […but it] can also mean a pointing-towards a difficult but worthwhile ideal.

Richard Hoggart, *An Idea And Its Servants: UNESCO From Within*, 1978: 42

Helpfully, Neal Stephenson already wrote the book on it. His 1995 novel *The Diamond Age; Or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer* tells the story of three young girls raised in a neo-Victorian nanotechnological culture (reliant on a technology called 'the feed'; essentially pipelines for matter compilers – like an advanced 3-D printer – that assemble atoms into objects) who are given access to an elite nanotech book known as 'the Primer', which aids them, through interactive storytelling, in their education and upbringing. The primer changes as the girls grow up, reacting to their circumstances and adapting the stories it tells to meet their immediate (real world) and developmental needs. Over the course of the novel, the technology comes into the possession of others who subsequently use (hack) a differently-interactive version of the book to educate an entire generation of abandoned Chinese girls.

The Diamond Age would have merely remained an ingenious piece of fiction if the non-profit organisation One Laptop Per Child (an outgrowth of the work begun by Nicholas Negroponte with the MIT Media Lab in 1985) had not, in fact, decided to model their 2012 "tablet-oriented education platform for children in the developing world" on Stephenson's novel (Ananian et al., 2012). The platform, named 'Nell' after one of the characters in the book (in turn, reflecting on the Dickens character of the same name), employs a "novel modular narrative system [which] guides learning, even for children far from educational infrastructure, and provides personalized instruction which grows with the child." (ibid.)

Since 2007, OLPC has distributed their custom XO laptops to two million children and teachers in Latin America and 500,000 in Africa (and go on refining and customising the laptops – and now tablets – over time and for each community, including those without reliable power or internet access).[101] In 2012, separate to their work with Nell, the OLPC also performed an 'experiment' where they placed nearly 1,000 boxed Motorola Zoom tablets with custom English-language operating systems in two Ethiopian villages where the official literacy rate was close to zero and waited to see (using tracking software) what use, if any, the children of the villages would put them to. According to Negroponte:

> We left the boxes in the village. Closed. Taped shut. No instruction, no human being. I thought, the kids will play with the boxes! Within four minutes, one kid not only opened the box, but found the on / off switch. He'd never seen an on / off switch. He powered it up. Within five days, they were using 47 apps

per child per day. Within two weeks, they were singing ABC songs [in English] in the village. And within five months, they had hacked Android. Some idiot in our organization or in the Media Lab had disabled the camera! And they figured out it had a camera, and they hacked Android. (Ackerman, 2012)

Notwithstanding the uncontrolled variables, the ethical considerations of consent and the questionable impact of their experiment[102], the OLPC wanted to find out whether a child with no access to schooling (and no likelihood of gaining access) could learn to read and write (in English, for now) through self-directed learning. The implications of this, given that "previous OLPC studies have shown that kids will use their computers to teach their parents to read and write as well" (ibid.), and combined with the possibilities of Nell, are staggering – communities of self-guided learning through a collaborative (user-AI) narrative structure; or, literature that eradicates illiteracy.[103]

This cart-before-the-horse solution (more of a horse-cart cyborg, really) has implications far broader even than the introduction of literacy into traditionally or transitionally oral cultures (UIS, 2009: 19-20). In fact, a specific combination of technologies – speech and optical character recognition, machine translation and predictive text / autocorrect – poses crucial questions for literacy and the future development of literature, insofar as they render all narrative (all texts) available to virtually anyone in / with any language – and, with predictive text, a far broader access is extended to those with limited facility or fluency. Contemporary examples of book-to-ebook variation also demonstrate an embryonic connection between new technologies of reading and possible structural or narrative changes (a 'return' to orality / aurality[104]), with the rise in popularity of podcasts and audio books and the development of applications like Audible's 'WhisperSync for Voice', which allows users to switch between text and audio versions of a book, and their 'Immersion Reading', which highlights text as audio is heard.[105] There are also digital comics, or 'enhancements' such as illustrated and animated or sound-tracked ebooks (Marvel has produced a feature called 'Adaptive Audio' which syncs music – not a loop or a soundtrack but actual evolving music – to your specific reading experience; Sava, 2013), or those that include app / platform or interactive / game features.[106] This is the state of the novel in the era of the ebook – technology at a tipping point (even given the perennial deaths and rebirths) and potential shifts in structure and focus as writers and readers explore, experiment and evolve; nonetheless, the contemporary exultation of globally interconnected, increasingly networked cultures still produces the same response – 'What is literacy for?'

*   *   *

What happens next? Paper novels might disappear, only to be replaced with other natural fibres (corn, sugarcane, bamboo) or synthetic ones (Tyvek, Teslin). Languages

might vary or agglomerate, become increasingly patois or creole, or be hermetically preserved through the power of universal translation. We might see the triumph of the 'illiterati' and the end of the big quiet – with almost nobody left reading 'on paper' (perhaps a few holding on, like speakers of 'classical' Latin) and all the rest of us plugged in, one way or another, to blaring screens, subject to shorter attention spans, governed by a near-infinity of pages on a tiny display; addicted or attuned to short or serialised fiction. Future novels might be written collectively or collaboratively (distributed authorship) or according to some new interactive social code or engagement between readers and writers (and editors, critics, rewriters). The ebook, a platform for the glorious democratisation of fiction, where generations of out-of-print writers and a caste of millions of hitherto 'unpublishables' can speak to us and each other, could also become its inverse, a mass grave where 'the author' is now almost-all-the-way dead because living writers cannot 'compete' – barely exist, have little meaning – in such a system. And in protecting access to our public domain, battling in the tumult like Sainte-Beuve's Hugo, against censorship and filters and copyright and commodification and glut – 'print on demand' an ideological catchcry – we might even defend ourselves, ebooks our bulwark against dumbing down, new stories shared to smarten up…

Or not. None of these futures is immediately obvious – television, video (VHS or BETA) and DVD (or BluRay) combined did not kill the cinema, nor cinema the theatre, nor the lending library the author, nor the paperback the hardback. There are only variations, speaking economically, in the vicissitudes of the marketplace – who does what and who gets paid and how much – and, speaking culturally, in the popularisation of forms, formats, practices. Of course there are deaths-of-a-sort – radio plays, for example, have all but disappeared – but there is also a clear demonstration of how each new technology translates old languages to new, brings new worlds into being. Here is one way we'll know when the ebook novel has 'arrived': it will have been written for the ebook format, with that technology in mind, with the strengths of that format in its structure and probably inflecting its content (setting, plot, language), too; a story written for an ebook generation. As for now, possibility is not probability – speculation has its limits. Terry Sanders followed up his documentary *Slow Fires* with a sequel in 1996 called *Into The Future: On The Preservation Of Knowledge In The Electronic Age*, in which the fretful concerns of the past were newly contextualised:

> John Seely Brown of the Xerox Corporation underscores this, declaring that only certain types of documents will be digitized, not all documents. Reference books, for instance, can and will be digitized; but, Brown tells us, the paperback read for pleasure at the beach will never be turned into an electronic text. (Sudhir, 1998)

Our slowness, our mulish resistance, to learn lessons from history is matched only by our seemingly boundless capacity to forget parts of it entirely; a condition exacerbated by the technology we use to augment our memories… unless we choose to plant seeds:

> The latest chapter in the story is a recent announcement by Brewster Kahle, the man behind the huge, non-profit digital library Internet Archive, who said that the organisation will be storing physical copies of every book it is able to acquire (including those scanned and kept in digital form). […] Internet Archive's motto is 'universal access to all knowledge', and it has digitised versions of nearly three million public domain books – a project that started in 1996, long before Google Books launched with a similar goal in 2004. […] According to an estimate produced by Google in 2010, there are nearly 130 million separate titles out there, and Internet Archive hopes to find storage for around 10 million of them, in various languages, as well as audio and video. The books will be packed into climate-controlled storage containers in a facility in Richmond, California, as of this month. (Holland, 2011)

Kahle notes that the Internet Archive's physical library will not be accessible for traditional library uses (browsing, borrowing) as the digitised texts are already being made available online. Instead, the aim of this action is simply one of preservation: "'A seed bank might be conceptually closest to what we have in mind,' Kahle says, 'storing important objects in safe ways to be used for redundancy, authority, and in case of catastrophe.'" (ibid.)[107]

This thesis's exposition on 'the death of the novel' and the presentiment of a new narrative began with speculation – because speculation, the act of imagination, is the core component, the heart, of fiction. Now we must turn to another line of enquiry, the prospective – because, ultimately, while indicative, speculation is not by itself proof.

PROSPECTIVE

'Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.' […] The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim. […]

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. […] A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. […] With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind (all supposititious, non-existent persons), but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind – no, sir!

From 'Book the First, Chapter One and Two' of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* **(n.d.: 9-11)**

Here was Mr. Gradgrind on the same day, and in the same hour, sitting thoughtful in his own room. How much of futurity did he see? Did he see himself, a white-haired decrepit man, bending his hitherto inflexible theories to appointed circumstances; making his facts and figures subservient to Faith, Hope, and Charity; and no longer trying to grind that Heavenly trio in his dusty little mills? […]

Here was Louisa on the night of the same day, watching the fire as in days of yore […]. These things [of the Present] she could plainly see. But, how much of the Future? […She, …] trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up, the sturdiest physical manhood will be morally stark death, and the plainest national prosperity figures can show, will be the Writing on the Wall, – she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but simply as a duty to be done, – did Louisa see these things of herself? These things were to be. Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be!

'Book the Third, Chapter Nine – Final' of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* **(n.d.: 382-384)**[108]

The conclusion of *Hard Times* never comes as a surprise to its readers: it is foreshadowed from the moment the plot moves from its initial scene of Gradgrind's worldview and its scholastic disbursement to, a few pages later, his dismay at finding his own children, Louisa and Tom, peeping into the back of a circus pavilion. Dickens titles the chapter 'A Loophole'; in this little hole in their reality, Gradgrind's children seek the unattainable object of their desire (ibid.: 19-23). Instead they get what their education paid for, an unhappy and ultimately broken marriage for Louisa (279-284) and a reckless spree and its inexorable consequences for Tom (365, 383).

There is no subtlety in these arguments. Gradgrind's children are mirrored in students of Gradgrind's school – Sissy, who is turned out of the school and is the happier for it (122-123, 257-259, 384) and Bitzer, who learnt the lessons all too well and tries to have Tom arrested for his own gain (370-371). The life, vitality and community of the circus is opposed to the industrial school and surroundings of Coketown (51-59, 77-85, 361-362, 374-377). Even the crucial metaphor of the fire and imagination and the value of the speculative mode of cognition are obvious enough, when pointed out: Louisa's imagination (23), that she unknowingly inherits from her father (31-32), shows her a different view of life than he intended (71, 74-75, 126-127, 133, 179) but which she returns to him in her moment of crisis (283).

Some readings of *Hard Times*, thus, as with F.R. Leavis's chrestomathic analysis in *The Great Tradition*, find its success as a novel in how truly self-contained it is – how, one supposes, self-evident it is – but where Leavis also finds greatness in the poetry of Dickens' 'profoundly serious intention', 'packed richness', 'imaginative genius' (Leavis, 1950: 244-248), we should also consider its 'greatness', its usefulness, outside of the world in the text.

True, its worthwhile moral – that measurements have an indivisible remainder, that people and the problems of people are multifarious and complex – is one that the reader of this section might reflect on: stating only 'the facts' (like using only the page numbers when quoting a novel) is insufficiently resourceful in addressing our problems.

What is less obvious is equally essential. Dickens – writing at the historical turn where the founding / funding of the public library takes place – structures his novel through three books: 'Sowing' (the planting of seeds – facts, truths, ideas), 'Reaping' (the harvest of knowledge) and 'Garnering' (the collection and collation of that knowledge). For this thesis, to go beyond the novel, the 'life-cycle of knowledge' also requires repeat acts of threshing and winnowing – sorting the wheat from the chaff, as it were – but further, the selection and preservation of seeds for future crops.

CHAPTER FOUR: 'RE:READING (SCRIPTURA IN MURUM)': LITERACY STATISTICS AND THE FUTURE OF READING

Many previous studies have treated literacy as a condition that adults either have or do not have. The IALS no longer defines literacy in terms of an arbitrary standard of reading performance, distinguishing the few who completely fail the test (the 'illiterates') from nearly all those growing up in OECD countries who reach a minimum threshold (those who are 'literate'). Rather, proficiency levels along a continuum denote how well adults use information to function in society and the economy. Thus, literacy is defined as a particular capacity and mode of behaviour [...]

OECD and Statistics Canada, 'Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey' (2000: 'x')[109]

For centuries, reading has largely been a solitary and private act, an intimate exchange between the reader and the words on the page. But the rise of digital books has prompted a profound shift in the way we read, transforming the activity into something measurable and quasi-public. The major new players in e-book publishing – Amazon, Apple and Google – can easily track how far readers are getting in books, how long they spend reading them and which search terms they use to find books. [...] Retailers and some publishers are beginning to sift through the data, gaining unprecedented insight into how people engage with books.

Alexandra Alter, 'Your E-Book Is Reading You' (*The Wall Street Journal*; updated 19/07/2012)[110]

It seems, then, that the age of the ebook novel is at hand. However, like the rise of prose after paper, the popular novel after the printing press and mass-produced genre fiction after the steam-powered rotary press, things take time to develop and the interregnum is defined, somewhat ironically, by its lack of distinction. The overall question, for this thesis, in this section, is: what can we predict in this initial period of digital culture – what trends, what identifiers, what facts or factors can help determine the future of narrative fiction? To this end the method of this section is to cover, in short order, reading practices in the context of literacy statistics, reading statistics in the context of changing library uses, and statistics relating to ebook and novel publishing in the context of contested cultural values. Of course, these things can't properly be measured against each other, only against themselves, and here only in a deliberately abridged format, but they do, aggregated, inform the future of narrative fiction. Put simply – the futures of novelists, publishers, booksellers, librarians and readers are interconnected by institution and practice; what can we infer regarding future novels from the studies, measurements and polls that exist in this early ebook era?

Hence, 'prospective', meaning 'expected or expecting to be the specified thing in the future'; a way of looking ahead, but also including the meaning 'looked-for' (as in prospecting, the act of a prospector, a 'data miner' or, in this case, fossicker). 'Prospective' actually has two intonations, both at play here – the weak (hoped-for, anticipated, potential) and the strong (imminent, eventual, destined) – and the facts, such

as they are, will likely fall somewhere in the middle. Finally, 'prospective' meaning foresight, which, shorn of its mythic qualities (as Milton put it – "And in time's long and dark prospective glass / Foresaw what future days should bring to pass"[111]) exceeds 'expectation' because it presupposes action – prediction and planning. This last meaning will help close out this section with a discussion of a public domain and the copyright concerns that assail it, an overarching context that brings the other strands together.

Before we continue, two disparate, metonymic examples of changing readership and models of reading are suggested by the themes under consideration. The first is the popular *1001… Before You Die* series of reference books published by Quintessence. Beginning in 2003 with *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die* (updated in 2011) and continuing in 2006 with *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die*, these works – new titles biannually and now available 'in app' – reflect the shifting subjectivity of the digital-era reader, confronted with effectively limitless information and requiring a strategic intercession. Their titles (and the name of the company founded to publish them) offer a troubling glimpse into the travails of the reader in the throes of consumption; reading, it is inferred, will be less and less for knowledge and instead a compulsive curriculum, a gavage of trivia, a pleasure / anxiety initiated by a morbid preoccupation with mortality.

Here, as a turn-of-the-21st-century response to Harvard Classics and Collier's 'Shelf of Fiction', the *1001… Before You Die* books act as a post-political, post-religious, post-elite, even, astonishingly, post-consumption Virgil; in their comprehensive fortification against the impossibility of choice (in what would hitherto be seen as the humanist glory of subjective experiences), they remove all need for choice – now you can simply read the book and inactively forego the experiences of a lifetime. The figure of '1001' is, itself, surely significant, invoking *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*: seemingly endless, a postponement of death, but also updateable, intertextual, cross-cultural (Boxall (ed.), 2009: 8-9). Despite the worst of their unexplicated, unexamined or unconscious intentions, the books are rigorous, fascinating and beautiful – they merely mirror a changed and changing readership and the decline of a prior experience of 'reading'.

The second example is a by-product of Google's privateered library, Google Books, in which the company attempted to make copies of every book they could find. As already explained, this proved contentious –and litigious – but to refer to Google simply as pirates mistakes the flavour of corporate endeavour, or, at least, the tension between their for-profit 'Partner Project' and their private-public-domain 'Library Project'. In any case, inspired by Google's digitisation project (amongst others), Erez Lieberman Aiden and Jean-Baptiste Michel from the Cultural Observatory at Harvard University built a prototype of a computational tool, the 'Bookworm' browser, which could survey the metadata of digitised books and provide quantitative results by selecting what they now call 'ngrams' – sequences of text, including words and phrases.

Of the 129,864,880 books estimated by Google to have been published since the 15th century, Google had, at the time of the project, digitised approximately 15 million, or about 12%[112]. The researchers then selected an optimal subset of 5,195,769 using files based on the quality of their optical character recognition and metadata. In their collaborative paper, detailing the outcomes of their research, Aiden and Michel noted:

> Analysis of this corpus enables us to investigate cultural trends quantitatively. We survey the vast terrain of 'culturomics', focusing on linguistic and cultural phenomena that were reflected in the English language between 1800 and 2000. We show how this approach can provide insights about fields as diverse as lexicography, the evolution of grammar, collective memory, the adoption of technology, the pursuit of fame, censorship, and historical epidemiology. 'Culturomics' extends the boundaries of rigorous quantitative inquiry to a wide array of new phenomena spanning the social sciences and the humanities. (Michel, et al., 2011)

They added:

> The corpus cannot be read by a human. If you tried to read only the entries from the year 2000 alone, at the reasonable pace of 200 words / minute, without interruptions for food or sleep, it would take eighty years. The sequence of letters is one thousand times longer than the human genome: if you wrote it out in a straight line, it would reach to the moon and back 10 times over. (ibid.; see also Michel and Aiden, 2011)

Their success motivated collaborators Matthew Gray, Jon Orwant and Will Brockman of Google Labs to, effectively simultaneously, create a publicly-accessible user interface for this, called the 'Google Ngram Viewer'. The interface allows users to find the frequency of ngrams (words, phrases etc.), chart them over time in relation to other ngrams and specifically pinpoint individual texts from any point within the corpus (the body of language-specific books being looked at; right now the Viewer includes corpora in American and British English, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Russian and Spanish). As Google continues to digitise texts, new corpora are added and updated. 'English Literature' ('Books predominantly in the English language that a library or publisher identified as fiction') is a fascinating example of how this might operate in the future; metadata allows increasingly specific and detailed readings of the corpus, or across corpora, and being able to match or measure literary trends with other socio-historic foci seems useful from a prospective (big-data-mining) perspective (see Anderson, 2008). For our purposes, it simply recircles the idea that new technologies of reading change how and what we read – not that the privately-owned Ngram Viewer is

going to perceptibly change our public reading habits but that it, like the *1001 Deaths*, offers us a snapshot portrait of how we are changing as readers.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The novel is dead, the author is dead, the reader is dead. Perhaps even the theorisation of such relationships is dead. Perhaps – but reports of illness and death are, to mildly misuse Mark Twain, often exaggerated (Scharnhorst (ed.), 2006: 317; see also Twain's *Chapters from My Autobiography*, 2006: 471). Certainly, given the cyclical phenomenon of such concerns, it seems a disservice to entirely confuse the material practices of reading and novel production with their theoretical counterparts (counter-partitions). Except, of course, that it is precisely now, with ereader feedback, that we have everybody communicating with the texts (in a post-Barthesian context, that the text close-reads you). In a key example crowning Alexandra Alter's article, the publishing company Coliloquy is cited:

> Coliloquy, a digital publishing company [, utilise…] a 'choose-your-own-adventure'-style format [in their novels], allowing readers to customize characters and plot lines. The company's engineers aggregate and pool the data gleaned from readers' selections and send it to the authors, who can adjust story lines in their next books to reflect popular choices. (Alter, 2012)

Here are some examples:

> In *Parish Mail*, Kira Snyder's young adult mystery series set in New Orleans, readers can decide whether the teenage protagonist solves crimes by using magic or by teaming up with a police detective's cute teenage son. Readers of *Great Escapes*, an erotic romance series co-written by Linda Wisdom and Lynda K. Scott, can customize the hero's appearance and the intensity of the love scenes. […] In Tawna Fenske's romantic caper *Getting Dumped* – which centers on a young woman who finds work at a landfill after getting laid off from her high-profile job at the county's public relations office – readers can choose which of three suitors they want the heroine to pursue. (ibid.; see also Snyder, 2012)

None of those examples radically differs from the gamebooks of the 1980s except that they offer more choices (of 'your own adventure') while nonetheless increasingly embracing the formulaic and the generic (Alter's decrying of the 'quasi-public' experience of ebooks is telling – with narrative in the Coliloquy mode, the feedback loop of our desires as read by machines becomes distinctly Orwellian, non-communal). What is significant, of the moment, is that it is not experimental fiction, not a game – it is a

framework, a philosophy inherent in the narrative technology, no longer speculative but built-in:

> Coliloquy was founded on the belief that digital technologies can push the boundaries of how we think about narrative and storytelling. We publish all of our books as active applications, rather than static files, allowing our authors to build ever-expanding worlds through episodic, serial storytelling and engagement mechanics, like choice and voting, branching story lines, re-reading loops, and personalized content. The result is an incredibly fluid and immersive story-telling experience. (Coliloquy, n.d.)[113]

Coliloquy is merely a feeble symptom[114] of a much larger outbreak in ereader feedback technology and its determination of how we read, reflecting a changing mode and model of readership (as with ngrams and *1001 Deaths*). This is the necessary contemporary context – capacity within a continuum – of reading literacy statistics; the measurements by themselves are incomplete, inarticulate. The other context is derived from the already-mooted differences between studies of literacy (ability) and readership (practice – i.e. whether we use the ability and for what). In her excellent essay 'Staying Awake: Notes on the alleged decline of reading', Ursula Le Guin writes:

> In 2004 a National Endowment for the Arts survey revealed that 43 percent of Americans polled hadn't read a book all year, and last November, in its report 'To Read or Not to Read', the NEA lamented the decline of reading, warning that non-readers do less well in the job market and are less useful citizens in general. […] The Associated Press ran their own poll and announced last August [2007] that 27 percent of their respondents had spent the year bookless […]. (Le Guin, 2008)

She avers, however:

> […I] want to question the assumption – whether gloomy or faintly gloating – that books are on the way out. I think they're here to stay. It's just that not all that many people ever did read them. Why should we think everybody ought to now? For most of human history, most people could not read at all. Literacy was not only a demarcator between the powerful and the powerless; it was power itself. Pleasure was not an issue. The ability to maintain and understand commercial records, the ability to communicate across distance and in code, the ability to keep the word of God to yourself and transmit it only at your own will and in your own time – these are formidable means of control over others and aggrandizement of self. Every literate society began with literacy as a constitutive prerogative of the (male) ruling class. Writing-

and-reading very gradually filtered downward, becoming less sacred as it became less secret, less directly potent as it became more popular. (ibid.)

This popularity, Le Guin concludes, culminates in what she calls 'the century of the book', achieving its zenith at the turn of the 20th century. It is the century in which public education became comprehensively institutionalised, as public schools and public libraries instilled common and communal senses of both literacy and literature. However, she rejects connections between literacy and reading as anything more than historically proportional to ability: some people read books and (in decreasing proportionality per McEwan's 'minority pursuit' – books, fiction, novels…) some don't. This should not be mistaken for an argument against literacy or reading, in any sense – it is simply a question of how we interpret the data.

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> To live, is to understand. To live, is to smile at the present; it is to be able to see over the wall of the future. […] Literature secretes civilisation, poetry secretes the ideal. That is why literature is one of the wants of societies; that is why poetry is a hunger of the soul. […] That is why there must be a vast public literary domain. That is why all the poets, all the philosophers, all the thinkers, all the producers of nobility of soul must be translated, commented on, published, printed, reprinted, stereotyped, distributed, hawked about, explained, recited, spread abroad, given to all, given cheaply, given at cost price, given for nothing.
>
> **Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, translated by Melville B. Anderson (1911: 295-296)**

Numbers do matter, do have valency, though – literacies still reflect power and prerogative. Victor Hugo in his book on Shakespeare goes on to quote statistics of literacy in the Toulon Penitentiary at that time: of the thousands of convicts only a handful knew "a little more than to read and write" (ibid: 297).[115] This connection between literacy, poverty, incarceration and recidivism identified by 19th-century writers such as Hugo and Dickens persists into the present, exemplified in this ostensibly chilling anecdote by Neil Gaiman:

> I was once in New York, and I listened to a talk about the building of private prisons – a huge growth industry in America. The prison industry needs to plan its future growth – how many cells are they going to need? How many prisoners are there going to be, 15 years from now? And they found they could predict it very easily, using a pretty simple algorithm, based on asking what percentage of 10 and 11-year-olds couldn't read. And certainly couldn't read for pleasure. (Gaiman, 2013)[116]

While narratively sound, in this case it is specifically inaccurate, however. There is no evidence that American prisons are using that particular factor to predict growth; however, there is evidence that incarceration and education are strongly linked through

other demographies – class, race, ethnicity, etc. – contextualised by cultural variations or national particulars.[117] This is especially important as an example of how contemporary societies define literacy as understood and measured not only as a philosophical 'universal good' (especially expressed through tropes of social justice, empowerment and inclusion) but also in 'practical' terms – how they inform economies (e.g. arising from or affecting industry and the state) and health (again, generally related to things like well-being or poverty but widely discussed as a concrete idea of 'health literacy'[118]) etc. There are myriad national studies of literacy that exist to explore this but collating and contrasting their results is beyond the scope of this thesis (and would presumably appear to replicate the 'two-tiered' model noted above); the international statistics provided by UNESCO / UIS and the OECD are far more useful, anyway, being the largest and most comprehensive studies of their type.

Literacy has been one of the central concerns of UNESCO since its inception[119]; its engagement has been predictably variable and politicised.[120] By any measure, however, the statistics provided by the 2013 / 2014 Education For All *Global Monitoring Report* were not encouraging[121]:

> In 2008, the EFA *Global Monitoring Report* asked – 'will we make it [meet the education benchmarks – goals – agreed to in 2000]?' […] this Report makes it clear that we will not. [In fact, it is clear that, despite advances over the past decade, not a single goal will be achieved …]. Fifty-seven million children are still failing to learn, simply because they are not in school. Access is not the only crisis – poor quality is holding back learning even for those who make it to school. One third of primary school age children are not learning the basics, whether they have been to school or not. […] Basic education is currently underfunded by US$26 billion a year, while aid is continuing to decline. (UNESCO, 2014a: 3, 5)

Of the six interlinked EFA goals (covering early childhood, primary, secondary and adult education, gender parity and the quality of education), only the specific literacy statistics need be recounted here[122]:

> Adult literacy has hardly improved. In 2011, there were 774 million illiterate adults, a decline of just 1% since 2000. The number is projected to fall only slightly, to 743 million, by 2015. Almost two-thirds of illiterate adults are women [and there has been no progress in reducing this share since 1990]. The poorest young women in developing countries may not achieve universal literacy until 2072. […In fact, youth] illiteracy is more widespread than previously believed: around 175 million young people in low and lower middle

income countries – equivalent to around one-quarter of the youth population – cannot read all or part of a sentence. (ibid.: 5, 10, 34)[123]

These figures appear to somewhat reflect the effects of population growth (and the vagaries of statistical averaging) on the percentage-modelling of illiteracy: the various UNESCO UIS reports – 796.165 million in 2008, 775.4 million in 2010, 773.5 million in 2011, 757 million in 2013 (UIS, 2010, 2012b, 2013b, 2015) – are sometimes expressed using decade averages[124], as in the June, 2013 UIS information report *Adult and Youth Literacy: National, regional and global trends, 1985-2015*: 880,504 million in 1990, 782,469 million in 2000, 773,549 million in 2010 and 742,799 million projected in 2015 (literacy rates as a percentage, decade averages: 75.7% in 1990, 81.9% in 2000, 84.1% in 2010 and 86.1% projected in 2015; UIS, 2013a: Table 1). In summary, it is a massive problem in slow decline, a decline which is mostly "due to the transition into adulthood of larger cohorts of better-educated children" (UNESCO, 2015: 3). What is more controversial, although unsurprising, is the gender divide when taken as a comparison of youth illiteracy with adult literacy:

> Adult illiteracy is a problem that affects more women than men in all EFA regions […]. For youth illiteracy, there is no such clear pattern. Globally, 61% of illiterate youths were female [but numbers are twice as high in regions like the Arab States (65%) as they are elsewhere, e.g Central Asia (32%)]. (UIS, 2013a:17)

Although not formally the topic of this thesis, the culturally specific conditions of inequality are significant, insofar as they are also replicated globally – in differing, culturally specific ways – in developed countries (the '99%'-literacy regions in the Pacific, the North Americas, and Western Europe, for example):

> Slow progress [and increased population growth] means that there has been little change in the number of countries achieving universal adult literacy. Of 87 [targeted] countries, 21% had reached universal adult literacy in 2000. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of countries that had reached this level increased to 26%. In 2015, 29% of countries are expected to achieve universal adult literacy […]. [Furthermore, while…] average figures on learning achievement provide an overall picture of the scale of the learning crisis, they can conceal large disparities within countries. Poverty, gender, location, language, ethnicity [particularly immigrant populations, displaced persons and indigenous populations in countries where they are a minority], disability and other factors mean some children are likely to get less support from schools to improve their learning. […] While rich countries' achievement levels are

generally higher, their education systems also fail [these] significant minorities. (UNESCO, 2014a: 10, 32-33)

Looking across the UNESCO documentation, from the Global Education Digests (since 2003), the Education For All *Global Monitoring Reports* (since 2002), the UIS factsheets and the LAMP updates, there is nonetheless a practical appreciation of the global scope and scale of the problems of illiteracy – despite the slow progress, there is no turning away from it. Even at the culmination of 15 years of hold-ups and setbacks (25 years if you date it from the Jomtien targets set in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990; UNESCO, 1990); 40 if you date it from the Persepolis meeting, which will be discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis), the struggle continues unabated.

There are two lynchpins to this. The first was a willingness to re-evaluate the approaches taken (and the destinations arrived at), typified by LAMP[125] and the LIFE framework ('Literacy Initiative for Empowerment ')[126], and by the work of the Learning Metrics Taskforce, co-convened by the UIS and the Brookings Center for Universal Education, which restructured the literacy debate into three questions: (i) What learning is important globally? (ii) How should it be measured? (iii) How can measurement of learning improve education quality?[127] The second, a commitment to the broadest possible interpretation of the uses of literacy, typified by the EFA program and its anticipatory, pre-emptive reboot by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon – the Education First Initiative ("put every child in school, improve the quality of learning, and foster global citizenship"; GEFI, 2012[128]), focussing on literacy to fight poverty, inequality (particularly gender inequality), the spread of disease and, most fascinating of all, given the UN and UNESCO's historical charter, literacy to fight war: because "literacy has been recognized not only as a right in itself but also as a mechanism for the pursuit of other human rights" (UNESCO, 2005: 137 and more broadly; see also UIS, 2009: 16).[129]

The role and work of the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development[130]) should also be acknowledged in this context – not because their statistics are entirely different in character from UNESCO / UIS (that is, in method; indeed UNESCO often relies on them, and LAMP was built on the back of the OECD's IALS and ALL Survey) but because the OECD provides a specific focus on literacy in 'developed' countries (i.e. the majority of its 34-country membership).

Before turning to their data, two points should be noted. First, some historical background to the statistics is necessary. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was conducted in three phases (in 1994, 1996 and 1998) in 20 countries. This was followed by the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) Survey in two phases (2003 and 2006-2008) in 10 countries. PIAAC (the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult

Competencies), beginning in 2008, is currently in its third phase across 40 countries.[131] Since 2000, the OECD has also conducted the triennial PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), an evaluation of 'literacies' in reading, mathematics and science amongst 15-year-old school students (the adult surveys are 16+) across 70 'economies'. The experience of the surveys defines their evolution from 'literacy' to 'competencies' (the IALS was arguably the first modern international comparative study to posit – and demonstrate – an understanding of literacy as a working continuum[132], rather than a delimited dichotomy or binary) and from 'literacy' to the broader model of 'literacies'.

Second, some context – while the UN is formally an organisation contrived to foster international cooperation for the 'greater good' of humanity, it is also, bluntly, a political organisation whose members vie for ideological advancement and narrowly-defined nationalistic advantage. This is equally true of the OECD, with the caveat that what's 'good' for humanity is 'free market politics'.[133] Bob Lingard in *Politics, Policies and Pedagogies in Education* puts it more sensitively:

> Globally, the OECD has been an institutionalizing mechanism for neoliberal economics and the new managerialism. […] Most significant, however, has been the OECD's role (along with other international organizations) as an institutionalizing mechanism for the new global educational policy consensus, which stresses the centrality of an educated and multiskilled labor force to the competitive advantage of nations. (Lingard, 2013: 97-98)

The uses of literacy interpreted and imagined and implemented by the OECD are often troublingly narrow in scope (education for economic competition, literacy to fuel economic 'growth') and the rise in and circulation of terms like 'financial literacy' and 'health literacy'[134] are conceptually connected to that scope: the end-goal of these literacies is the 'education' of the individual to take 'responsibility' in relation to the global, national or regional ramifications of neoliberal – that is, globally capitalist, competitive, consumerist – politics and policies; to make people 'fit for markets' (Wilby, 2010; Soman, 2011). As with the UN, while such education can and has improved and even saved lives, the implicit construction of 'individualist' subjectivities is of critical concern. This ideological valuation of 'financial literacy', in particular, represents a significant priority-shift or 'priority-enhancement'[135] for the OECD, relevant here because it was included, along with 'problem solving', in the most recent round of PISA testing in 2012.

Keeping those points very much in mind, the other significant difference to consider when looking at PIAAC and PISA[136] as opposed to the UIS / UNESCO statistics is that what the OECD surveys measure best is trends extrapolated from sample populations. In other words, their continuum of literacy / illiteracy does not result in 'useful' numbers but

measured and usable snapshots of populations. For the purposes of a limited comparison, here's who was tested in PISA 2012:

> All 34 OECD member countries and 31 partner countries and economies participated in PISA 2012, representing more than 80% of the world economy. [...] Around 510,000 students between the ages of 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months completed the assessment in 2012, representing about 28 million 15-year-olds in the schools of the 65 participating countries and economies. (OECD, 2014b: 3)

And here is who was tested in the first round ('Survey of Adult Skills') of PIAAC, beginning in 2008 and ending in 2013:

> Around 166,000 adults aged 16-65 were surveyed in 24 countries and sub-national regions [...]. (OECD, 2013a: 5)

While the primary social use of these surveys – comparing countries against each other and themselves over time – is of less relevance to this thesis[137], two things are worth examining here. The first is the percentage of people / students that fall below a baseline level of proficiency, and second, the percentage of those that fall below the lowest common level of measurement:

> 18% of students [could not perform tasks at...] a baseline level of proficiency at which students begin to demonstrate the reading literacy competencies that will enable them to participate effectively and productively in life. (OECD, 2014a, 196, 195)[138]

PISA also measures two separate levels of proficiency below the 'baseline' ('1a' – higher, '1b' – lower):

> [Nearly] 6% of students do not even attain Level 1a. [...In] 20 participating countries and economies more then [sic.] one in three students performs at Level 1a or below. [Furthermore, across...] OECD countries, 1.3% of students are not proficient at Level 1b [compared to 1.1% in 2009], but there are wide differences between countries. [...] Across [almost] all participating countries and economies, [...] fewer than 5% of students are not proficient at Level 1b. [...] This does not necessarily mean that they are illiterate, but that there is insufficient information on which to base a description of their reading proficiency. Such students are likely to have serious difficulties in benefitting from further education and learning opportunities throughout life [...]. (ibid.: 196-197; see also OECD, 2010a: 53)[139]

It should also be noted that at the next level up ('Level 3': 'associated with being able to perform the kinds of tasks that are commonly demanded of adults in their everyday lives'), 'nearly one in two boys (49%) but only one in three girls (34%)' failed to reach that level. "[These] differences are associated with differences in student attitudes and behaviours that are related to gender" (ibid.: 199[140]) but are not innate to it; being the exact opposite experience of gendered illiteracy in the developing world reported by the UN above. Gender and (specific) nationality aside:

> [Among] students who fail to reach the baseline level of performance (Level 2) […], meaning that, at best, they can only handle the simplest and most obvious tasks, most can be expected not to continue with education beyond compulsory schooling, and therefore risk facing difficulties using mathematics, reading and science concepts throughout their lives. The proportion of 15-year-old students at this level varies widely across countries, from fewer than one student in ten in four countries and economies, to the majority of students in 15 countries. Even in the average OECD country, where more than one in five students does not reach Level 2, tackling such low performance is a major challenge. (OECD, 2014b: 9)

So, broadly (only marginally inaccurately) we can say that one in five 15-year-old students in OECD countries ('developed countries' – again, marginally inaccurately) are in the context of their culture insufficiently literate. How does this compare to the PIAAC study of the adult population? According to 'OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills':

> [Even] highly literate nations have significant liabilities in their talent pool. Indeed, a closer look at the results reveals that more than nine-tenths of the overall variation in literacy skills observed through the survey lies within, rather than between, countries. In fact, in all but one participating country, at least one in ten adults is proficient only at or below Level 1 in literacy or numeracy. In other words, significant numbers of adults do not possess the most basic information-processing skills considered necessary to succeed in today's world. (OECD, 2013e: 28; see also 2013a: 9)

In short (ignoring their problematic choice of words), what PIAAC is describing are class differences more than cultural ones, and somewhere on the order of one in ten.[141] Again, these comparisons are inadequate – arguably more than marginally so – but they at least (and possibly at most) provide scope for discussion. In 'Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey' (2005; that is, from the first phase of the ALLS), the OECD claimed: "Depending on the country, between one-third and over two-thirds of adult populations do not attain skill Level 3, the level considered by experts as a suitable

minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge society and information economy [...]." (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005: 31)

Understandably, these surveys are not easily statistically comparable (ALLS is not PIAAC – they are measuring different populations at different times with different tools[142]). One way in which they can be compared, however, is that they both provide snapshots of how 'developed' countries appear to themselves over time, and the conclusion is that, almost universally, all countries / economies / cultures / populations contain a significant percentage of persons who are 'insufficiently literate' – far higher than the picture of 'near-universal literacy' ('99%') that is the alternate, already-discussed portrait of the developed world. Equivocation and relativism have unfortunately masked this problem – and the urgency of aiding especially vulnerable individuals and populations is undeniable, not least from the particular points of view of the UN or the OECD – but it is a significant conclusion nonetheless. Whether it is 750-800 million people primarily in the developing world, or one in three, one in five, or one in ten people in the developed world, it is not a two-tiered problem. It's the same problem, in some cases with life-or-death consequences, unevenly distributed amongst the poor, the exploited, the dispossessed and the disenfranchised.[143]

Brief reference to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IAEA / IEA) ongoing comparative literacy study, PIRLS ('Progress in International Reading Literacy Study'), provides the final context of measurement for this section.[144] Beginning in 2001[145] (on a 5-year cycle), PIRLS measures transnational trends in fourth-grade reading comprehension[146]. The 2011 PIRLS, the most recent evaluation at time of writing, categorised only 5% of the students tested (310,345 students across 49 countries) as falling below their standard of (the median of) a 'low international benchmark'[147], with a small percentage – at points unevenly distributed – recording an 'achievement too low for assessment' (IEA, 2012: 262-271; 41, 44). The measurement here – one in twenty – is not immediately comparable to PISA (different ages of students tested, different students, different test, etc.) but while in a general sense the outcomes all point to a widespread international problem, in an exact and specific sense they also highlight the divergent question of how and where we set the 'benchmarks'.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

In 1957, UNESCO published 'the first systematic survey of illiteracy on a world-wide scale undertaken by an international organization', 'World Illiteracy At Mid-Century: A Statistical Study'[148], which summarised the global situation:

> [It] is estimated that there are about 700 million adult illiterates in the world today. They represent about 44 per cent of the total world population 15

years old and over. Almost half of all the countries and territories (97 out of 198) are believed to have 50 per cent or more illiteracy among their adult population […]. (UNESCO, 1957: 13)

With this data, one benchmark was set and continues to be addressed. In the same study, however, another benchmark was rudimentarily outlined, one that languished for decades (and even now proves controversial) – for amongst all the other claims presented for or about literacy / illiteracy, three still resonate:

(i) "The phenomenon of illiteracy is not confined to any particular part of the world or group of countries. It exists everywhere in varying degrees."

(ii) "The first problem to be met in counting illiterates is to define what is meant by illiteracy. As a matter of fact, literacy is a characteristic acquired by individuals in varying degrees from just above none to an indeterminate upper level. Some individuals are more literate or less literate than others, but it is really not possible to speak of literate and illiterate persons as two distinct categories."

(iii) "In the opinion of many educationists, a minimum level of literacy is not enough to enable a person to participate effectively in the collective life of a modern community." (ibid.: 6 (preface), 18, 20)

The 1957 study begins with a list of 24 questions concerned with the 'education and well-being of mankind'. At the end of the list, two questions are posed: "Finally, what is the basic purpose in teaching people how to read and write? What specific skills, and how much of them, should a person possess in order to be considered a literate person?" (ibid.: 9) One answer would be that in the last century the human population of the earth has exploded and the percentage population of 'illiterates' has shrunk; nonetheless huge numbers of people continue to be considered insufficiently literate by the 'functionality' or participation standards of their culture or community. Whether you mark it from the foundation of the UN / UNESCO or the Jomtien Declaration, there has, however, been a huge, global, response to the problem in its different forms, one part of which – the linking of the political potential of literacy to the practice of democracy – has consequentially created an undeniable bridge between literacy (ability) and its uses and practices (i.e. reading) that superimposes a 'critical' principle over the merely 'functional'.

Interestingly, Ursula Le Guin has provoked the answer to her own question above – 'why should we think everybody ought to read now?' – made explicit as uncommon sense: reading fiction is not the point except in the ways and to the extent it gives people the tools and the impetus to read critically and engage emphatically with society. This is a question for ereaders too, which have the transformative capacity to eradicate illiteracy

but also, through their propensity for manufacturer (corporate) feedback, pose serious questions about what readers in fact will continue to be offered. The international studies of literacy can perform one final metaphorical duty in aid of this argument: they can be used for competition, the success of some over others, or they can be used communally, to make examples from what succeeds and use it to aid those who are struggling. These uses of literacy coexist but are ultimately, utterly contradictory.

CHAPTER FIVE: 'CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS (EX LIBRIS…)': READING STATISTICS AND THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES

[Even] highly educated people are often willing to wave goodbye to reading – for others at least – on the grounds that we are now living within the post-Gutenberg visual revolution. Some people pass their lives without once reading a work of creative literature all the way through. It was always so.

Richard Hoggart, *The Way We Live Now* (1995: 66)

The book in my hands was so old and stiff and musty that it seemed impossible that it had been opened within the past century […]. A subtitle announced: *Being a Collection from Printed Sources of Universal Secrets of Such Age That Their Meaning Has Become Obscured of Time*. […] I opened the book at random and read, '…by which means a picture might be graven with such skill that the whole of it, should it be destroyed, might be recreated from a small part, and that small part might be any part.'

Gene Wolfe, *The Book Of The New Sun – Volume 1: Shadow And Claw* (2001: 64-65)

The legendary comedian Bill Hicks used to tell a joke where he is reading a book in a restaurant and a waitress asks him, "What you readin' for?", and he responds incredulously, "Wow, I've never been asked that – not 'What am I reading?', but 'What am I reading *for*?'" (Hicks et al., 1989) This joke, shorn of its punchlines, has a deeply serious point, echoing Hoggart's acerbic thoughts about the death of literacy, of literature, of the novel (see also Hoggart, 2001: 198). Notwithstanding the political significance of literacy, its practical implications in terms of equality and access to culture and its connection to a democratic ideal, some people just don't read and nor do they care to. As with the studies of literacy already discussed, this can also be measured; unfortunately, however, a concern with why people can read but don't is less extensively discussed, and is generally interpreted only as a mild symptom of illiteracy. The studies, such as they are, are worthy of comment[149] but the most decisive way of interpreting the results may be, in this section, from the intermediary position of the public library – as a historically located democratic institution, the public library is uniquely positioned to provide a focal point to critically discuss reading habits and to embody and emphasise the changing culture of readership in a digital context.

Before we visit the library, though, it must be noted that there is bound to be some confusion when comparing literacy studies with surveys of reading (an ability to read vs. people actually reading and what they read), being two variably different practices, even though the basic mechanism is the same. The first step, then, is to pick up where we left off, with the international studies of 'reading literacy' (narrowly focused population-wise, perhaps, but the largest studies yet available). Immediately, trends can be articulated, simply by 'measuring the tools'. The OECD studies of adult literacy (IALS, ALLS, PIAAC) focus mainly on attainment (reading performance) with less concern for attitudes

towards reading or other influences on achievement. The OECD and IEA studies of student literacy, on the other hand, have historically registered the importance of attitudes towards reading, but in recent years both PISA and PIRLS – arguably in line with their statistics that perceive a decreased interest in reading amongst young people – have shifted emphasis somewhat.

To start with the IEA: between 1988-1992, the IEA performed a study of 'reading literacy' using 210,059 9-year-old and 14-year-old school students from 32 'school systems' (31 countries; East and West Germany separately assessed) across the globe.[150] Calculating achievement by age, nationality, gender and other conventional measurements (home language vs. the language of instruction, urban / rural location etc.), they also made a determined effort to explore related issues such as 'other influences on achievement' (e.g. availability of books at home and school, and access to libraries and bookstores, the influence of students self-assessed ability on their ability, and the amount and possible influence of watching television on reading ability[151]), 'how does one become a good reader' (to have the students link literacy acquisition strategies with achievement) and 'voluntary reading patterns' (of books, comics, magazines and newspapers; IEA and Elley, 1992: ch. 7-9).

While influences on achievement and voluntary reading patterns have continued to be measured to some degree, there does not appear to have been any follow-up on some of these questions (e.g. access to bookstores, student opinions on acquisition strategies[152]) and most of the others have also declined in focus. The study argued:

> It is a matter of concern to educators that a number of studies indicate that reading activity out of school is declining in spite of the greater variety of attractive books and magazines available to today's young people. Surveys conducted in the United States, Ireland, England, Scotland and New Zealand, among others, have drawn attention to the small numbers of books read by typical students in their own leisure time […]. For many students, then, the research appears to show that reading is something separate from real life, something to be learned at school and then used only if it cannot be avoided. […] Without this desire [to read], students will not participate fully in their society. (IEA and Elley, 1992: 79)

Whether this reflects changing societal practices (or merely invokes the kind of 'slow fire' / 'social panic' previously discussed) is arguable. In any event, the educators were hardly alone in such concerns, which have continued to circulate; see, for example, the US National Reading Panel (2000) which "encouraged parents to help their children strike a balance between literacy-related activities and perhaps less enriching pastimes such as playing video games or watching excessive amounts of television" (IEA, 2012: 203). As for

the results, there are predictable correlations between access and attitude and ability and achievement, varying for national differences, gender, etc.; e.g. ibid.: 202.

In the 2001 and 2006 PIRLS, the IEA continued to measure both literacy resources and (pre-school) literacy activities (e.g. parents reading books to children) available in the home environment of students (along with a measure of parent attitudes towards reading), as well as student attitudes towards reading and those 'voluntary' literacy activities students engaged in outside of school (IEA, 2003: ch. 4 & 8; IEA, 2007: ch. 3-4): in 2001, 51% of parents (international average) reported often reading books to their children before they started their primary school years (7% 'never or almost never'); in 2006 this was subsumed into the more general EHLA ('Early Home Literacy Activities', now 'including telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys, word games, and reading aloud signs and labels') – 54% of students registered a high EHLA (meaning 'often') and 13% indicated a low EHLA (meaning 'never or almost never'; compared to 52% and 13% in 2001; IEA, 2003: 97-98; IEA, 2007: 109).

Furthermore, these early PIRLS reported lower than expected computer-assisted reading activities:

> [Whereas] the traditional parent-child activity of enjoying a book together was quite common in most countries, parents reported far less involvement with newer forms of literacy activities. Almost 80 percent of students [in 2001], on average, had parents who reported never or almost never doing reading activities on the computer with them before they reached school-going age. […] Only in Canada […] and France were there as many as 10 percent of students with parents reporting often using the computer for reading activities with their child. (IEA, 2003: 99)

Arising from previous studies of access, the 2001 and 2006 PIRLS also included an index of home educational resources (HER), based on student and parent reports of parents' education, numbers of books in the home, numbers of children's books, and the variable presence of four 'educational aids' (a computer, their own study desk, their own books, and access to a daily newspaper). The high level of the index indicated 'more than 100 books, more than 25 children's books, at least three of the four educational aids, and at least one parent having completed university education' (13% in 2001, 11% in 2006). The low level reflected 'fewer than 25 books or children's books in the home, no more than two of the educational aids and parents that had not completed secondary education' (13% in 2001, 9% in 2006). More specifically, 20% of parents and 15% of students in 2001 reported having more than 200 books in the home, whereas 16% of parents and 19% of students reported having 10 or fewer; in 2006 this was narrowed to

reporting children's books, where 13% of parents reported more than 100 and 22% reported 10 or fewer (IEA, 2003: 104-113; IEA, 2007: 110-115).[153]

Finally, the amount parents read at home (i.e. not for work) and their attitude towards reading was also reported.[154] In 2001, 17% of parents reported reading at home for more than 10 hours per week (45% reported reading for enjoyment 'every day or almost every day'), whereas 19% reported reading for less than one hour per week. In fact, 34% of parents reported reading 'for enjoyment' only once or twice a week, 13% once or twice a month, and 8% never or almost never (IEA, 2003: 122-123). In 2006, only 37% of parents reported reading at home more than 5 hours per week (with 20% reading less than one hour per week), despite 47% of parents saying they read for enjoyment every day or almost every day (34% once or twice a week, 18% twice a month or less; see IEA, 2007: 129-130); this trend is intact – PISA 2009 reports 40.32% of their parents reading at home more than 5 hours a week, 17.37% reading less than one hour.

The PIRLS also measured 'literacy activities outside of school' for students. In 2001, 40% of students reported reading for fun, outside of school, every day or almost every day (29% once or twice a week, 12% once or twice a month, 18% never or almost never; 2006: 40% every day or almost every day, 28% once or twice a week, 32% twice a month or less). When broken down to 'reading stories or novels outside of school' (is it significant that they did not ask if this was fun?), this was rendered as 32%, 31%, 18% and 19%. In 2006, these (averaged international) figures were identical: i.e. 32% every day or almost every day, 31% once or twice a week, 18% once or twice a month and 19% never or almost never (IEA, 2003: 268-269; IEA, 2007: 146-147, 155).

In 2011, PIRLS had adopted a revised scale for HER (now called 'Home Resources for Learning') with three analogous categories: 'many resources' (more than 100 books, at least 25 children's, at least one parent with a university education and professional occupation, and, tellingly, their own room and an internet connection), 'some resources' and 'few resources' (25 or fewer books, 10 or less children's books, neither the internet nor their own room, and neither parent with an education beyond upper secondary school nor business, clerical or professional occupation). As those categories are so generic, the details are more relevant, perhaps, than the statistics – 18% with 'many' and 9% with 'few'.[155] In any case, broken down, this meant that 27% of students (international average) had more than 100 books and 59% had more than 25 children's books; 55% had both their own room and internet connection. To make the comparison even clearer, more than half the students in all nations/regions (except the bottom 16; no data on Israel) had internet access, whereas no nation/region had more than half of its students reporting more than 100 books in the house, and (excluding the top 16, starting with Australia at 41%) twenty-one nations/regions had between 21-31% of students with more than 100 books; only nine had 20% or fewer. In 2001, parents had reported an

international average of 35% (more than 100 books), with 12 nations/regions reporting above 41% (topping out at Norway, 67%).[156]

Regarding the involvement of parents, 2011 PIRLS expanded their EHLA categories (now just ELA) to include 'oral language activities' (literally, talking to your children – 'talking about things done', 'talking about things read' – and 'writing letters or words'), resulting in: 37% often, 3% never or almost never. Taking into account the addition of 'talking', this is a massive drop – only five countries registered at 52% or higher[157], the average in 2001.[158] In 2009, conversely, PISA took a page out of PIRLS and tested an almost identical list (on parents), including reading books to the pre-schooler (never or hardly ever 7.05%, once or twice a month 15.26%, once or twice a week 30.89%, every day or almost every day 45.20% – so, consistent with 2001 PIRLS).[159]

Even more radically, statistics relating to the amount students read 'for fun' were now (in 2011) subsumed into data on to what extent 'students like reading' (now located in a chapter on 'classroom instruction': 28% of students[160]); there was no data recorded as to what amount parents read, or their (self-reported) attitudes towards reading, or what types of things students read for enjoyment (e.g. novels). This data ('liking reading') was also connected to a scale of what motivated students to read based on their responses to six statements / facets: 'I like to read things that make me think; It is important to be a good reader; My parents like it when I read; I learn a lot from reading; I need to read well for my future; and I like it when a book helps me imagine other worlds'. The study noted:

> Some students have the disposition to read simply because they like it, but it also is possible for parents and teachers to provide extrinsic motivation in the form of external recognition, rewards, or incentives. […] Interestingly, on average, internationally, fourth grade students reported greater motivation to read than liking of reading. On average, three-fourths of the students reported being Motivated readers whereas only about one-fourth reported liking to read […]. Apparently, fourth grade students may understand the value of reading as way of learning, even though they do not choose to read as a leisure activity. There was some variation across countries, but very few fourth grade students, on average, reported a lack of motivation (5%). These students had substantially lower average reading achievement than their more highly motivated counterparts. (IEA, 2012: 210)[161]

In short, in the 2011 PIRLS we can see outlined changing societal practices relating to reading (people – children – are 'enjoying' reading less; less books presumably, anyway) but more importantly a disposition to change the terms of debate ('statistics by other means', if you will).[162] How does this all relate to the OECD and PISA? PISA 2000 was, as might be expected from a first attempt at an international survey of students, alternately

vague and surprisingly specific[163], taking an 'everything including the dishwasher' approach.[164]

Some questions were fruitful, such as Q19(b) "In general, how often do your parents discuss books, films or television programmes with you?"; Answers: 13.06% never or hardly ever – the OECD average, 18.24% a few times a year, 14.70% about once a month, 26.31% several times a month, 25.56% several times a week.[165] Also, Q36(c) "How often do you read fictions … because you want to?"; Answers: 25.82% never or hardly ever, 25.80% a few times a year, 18.11% about once a month, 16.20% several times a month, 11.17% several times a week. Although this seems a bit low, more than half the respondents read a book of fiction – let's call it a novel – a few times a year or less.[166] Overall, the answers to Q36 are a snapshot of technological shift – on average, students who reported reading fiction several times a week also read at such frequency 39.32% newspapers, 32.86% magazines, 27.03% web pages and email, 14.05% comics, and 5.68% non-fiction books.

Other questions may have produced more skewed results, for example Q21(i) "In your home, do you have classic literature (e.g., <Shakespeare>)?" (presumably another author was substituted for Shakespeare in cultures where reading Shakespeare is less traditional; hence the twin problematics of valuation and comparison…); Answers: 55.72% yes, 42.27% no – the same question was asked in 2009, with 52.46% yes, 45.63% no, as the answers. The other affirmative answers in this section in 2001 also provide a picture of basic needs being met across the OECD and cultural and technological needs being met for roughly three-fifths of OECD students – that in the home respondents had (a) a dishwasher (57.70%), (b) a room of your own (82.64%), (c) educational software (56.69%), (d) a link to the Internet (45.28%), (e) a dictionary (95.98%), (f) a quiet place to study (90.58%), (g) a desk for study (90.78%), (h) text books (89.64%), (j) books of poetry (57.63%), (k) works of art (e.g., paintings) (60.37%). In 2009, the answers were almost identical in every category, only a few percent different except for poetry which had dropped 6% and the internet, which had almost doubled (88%).

A concern for 'classic' literature can be compared to the overall number of books students reported in their home[167] (Q37 "How many books are there in your home?"; Answers: none (1.59%), 1-10 books (8.02%), 11-50 books (19.08%), 51-100 books (20.74%), 101-250 books (20.97%), 251-500 books (15.30%); again, almost identical to 2009[168]), how often they borrow books from the library (Q38 "How often do you borrow books to read for pleasure from a public or school library?"; Answers: 41% never or hardly ever, 32.16% a few times per year, 15.89% about once a month, 8.60% several times a month[169]) and, more broadly, time spent reading for enjoyment (Q34 "Each day, about how much time do you usually spend reading for enjoyment?"; Answers: I do not read for enjoyment (30.57%; male respondents 40.2%, female respondents 23.3%; see also OECD,

2001: 280); I read 30 minutes or less each day (29.82%), between 30-60 minutes (21.39%), 1-2 hours (10.66%), more than 2 hours (4.06%)).[170] Over half of the Japanese respondents stated they do not read for pleasure (52.53%) and more than one-third of all students in 11 other countries felt similarly; conversely, at least one in ten students in six countries stated they read for more than 2 hours a day, and between one in five and one in ten students in twenty more countries read for more than an hour (compare to OECD, 2001: 268-280).

Finally, as a measure of attitudes more than practices or materiality, PISA 2000 also asked a series of interrelated 'index' questions: "How much do you disagree or agree with these statements about reading?" (a) "I read only if I have to" (summed ranges: 62.62% disagree, 35.15% agree), (b) "Reading is one of my favourite hobbies" (63.15% disagree, 34.54% agree), (c) "I like talking about books with other people (62.87% disagree, 34.57% agree), (d) "I find it hard to finish books" (64.77% disagree, 32.57% agree), (e) "I feel happy if I receive a book as a present" (50.08% disagree, 47.12% agree), (f) "For me, reading is a waste of time" (75.97% disagree, 21.23% agree), (g) "I enjoy going to a bookstore or a library" (50.63% disagree, 46.50% agree), (h) "I read only to get information that I need" (53.29% disagree, 44.07% agree), and (i) "I cannot sit still and read for more than a few minutes" (74.07% disagree, 23.51% agree).[171]

All in all, PISA 2000 is something of a confused instrument, plagued by odd positions like this:

> About half of the 15-year-olds surveyed in PISA are generally positive about reading. On average across OECD countries, about 21% […] of students agree that reading is fun and that they would not want to give it up. Another 27% […] of students agree 'somewhat' with this statement. (OECD, 2001: 100)

First of all, the question is in reference to a statement "Because reading is fun, I wouldn't want to give it up" (which is arguably leading). Secondly, its conclusion "I wouldn't want to give it up" is, frankly, a bizarre thing to confront 15-year-olds with (and is reflected in the almost exact response rate – 21.33% disagree, 21.31% agree[172]).

The 2009 PISA was, thankfully, a more polished affair.[173] Unlike PIRLS 2011, PISA 2009 maintained or enhanced most lines of enquiry – still asking students background questions about their access to literature ('classical' or otherwise), how often they borrow books from the library and how many books they have at home[174], checking student responses to a diversity of media, the amount of time students spend reading and student attitudes towards reading. It also extended its inquiry towards practices of online reading, and parents received their own questionnaire.

In response to a question, Q25(c) "How often do you read fiction … because you want to?", students responded: 23.62% never or hardly ever, 25.47% a few times a year, 19.59% about once a month, 17.46% several times a month and 12.17% several times a week; so only 1-2% difference from PISA 2000 and minutely trending upwards in the last three categories. As discussed elsewhere, differences from PIRLS (pre-adolescents, adults) could convincingly be explained by developmental differences rather than generational ones – the point is the trend is steady between cohorts.

By comparison, the responses to "How often do you read magazines because you want to?" (31.84% several times a month, 25.93% several times a week); 'comic books' (12.55% several times a month, 9.62% several times a week); 'non-fiction books' (12.91% several times a month, 5.56% several times a week); and 'newspapers' (23.83% several times a month, 38.02% several times a week) are all consistent with PISA 2000.[175]

Predictably 'reading web pages and email' (2000: 27.03%) was spun off into another question – Q26 "How often are you involved in the following [online] reading activities?" (with the interesting interim category – "I don't know what it is" – registering 1.46%-3.14% in all questions except one) – reading emails (63.15% several times a week or more; summed categories), chat online (72.64% several times a week or more), reading online news (45.13% several times a week or more), using an online dictionary / encyclopaedia, e.g. Wikipedia (38.57% several times a week or more), searching online topical information (50.81% several times a week or more), online groups / forums (19.42% several times a week or more), searching online practical information (35.16% several times a week or more)[176].

None of the above would be particularly interesting or surprising anymore (the uses of the internet even a few years on are so much broader and more complex), except that it relates to (a) how the internet has become a tool to achieve or accompany almost every activity in contemporary society; and (b) how new technologies replicate the purposes / forms / languages of prior technologies (e.g. online news, comics etc.) before more fully developing into their own. For instance, not registered in 2009 by PISA but of huge consequence – with millions of readers, especially younger readers, and millions of stories, especially short and free fiction – is the reading of fiction online, not only as ebooks but at sites like Wattpad, An Archive Of Our Own, and fanfiction.net and in diverse forms (e.g. Tumblr fan fiction, Kindle Worlds) and uploaded to diverse platforms (e.g. Goodreads, Internet Archive).

Time spent in reading is relatively stable between 2000 and 2009 – Q23 "About how much time do you usually spend reading for enjoyment?"; Answers: I do not read for enjoyment (37.01%), 30 minutes or less each day (30.06%), between 30-60 minutes (17.04%), 1-2 hours (10.54%), more than 2 hours (4.41%). As it is marginal in every

category except the first it may mostly reflect an increase in those responses captured, i.e. students whose responses were previously read as invalid or who did not respond – it would be wrong to interpret it as more than a few percentage points in downturn.

Responses to the 'index' questions also proved stable between the two studies: "How much do you disagree or agree with these statements about reading?" (a) "I read only if I have to" (summed ranges: 58.35% disagree, 40.87% agree), (b) "Reading is one of my favourite hobbies" (66.56% disagree, 32.65% agree), (c) "I like talking about books with other people" (61.81% disagree, 37.27% agree), (d) "I find it hard to finish books" (66.89% disagree, 32.27% agree), (e) "I feel happy if I receive a book as a present" (53.08% disagree, 45.96% agree), (f) "For me, reading is a waste of time" (75.08% disagree, 23.98% agree), (g) "I enjoy going to a bookstore or a library" (57.5% disagree, 41.59% agree), (h) "I read only to get information that I need" (53.84% disagree, 45.33% agree), and (i) "I cannot sit still and read for more than a few minutes" (74.34% disagree, 24.81% agree). In 2009, two new questions were also asked: (j) "I like to express my opinions about books I have read" (42.94% disagree, 56.26% agree) and (k) "I like to exchange books with my friends" (63.34% disagree, 35.93% agree).

As can be seen, those categories are mostly stable, but with a minute trend – 3% – away from reading as a favourite hobby or wanting to get a book as a present and a more noticeable rise – 5.72% – in 'I only read if I have to', some but not all of which could be improved response capture. The largest shift has been enjoying going to a bookstore or library, from 50.63% to 57.5% disagreeing. In Australia, there has been a perceptible decrease in the number of physical bookstores one can go to, though whether this is replicated throughout OECD countries or globally is unknown (the publisher Pearson noted in their 2012 SEC 20-F filing that more than 750 stores had closed in 2011, especially those of Borders and REDGroup; Pearson, 2012: 34). That there has been a parallel decrease in libraries is also likely, as *Slate* reported: "2012 marked the third consecutive year [in the US] in which more than 40 percent of states decreased funding for libraries. […] In the United Kingdom, a much more severe austerity program shuttered 200 public libraries in 2012 alone."; Susan Cooper adds that 93% of libraries in the US 'cut their staff, hours or both' (Cooper, 2013; Agresta, 2014). In any event, there has been a perceptible shift in the uses of libraries and we will turn to that shortly.

As to the fundamental question of whether people are reading less or enjoying it less in the digital era, the answer appears to be no, or not exactly.[177] While there is a rise in the percentage of PISA students who do not read for pleasure (from 30.57% to 37.01% – 6.44%) and those who read only if they have to (35.15% to 40.87% – 5.72%), the percentage of those who do read for pleasure has only fallen 3.88% between 2000 and 2009 (almost entirely amongst students who read less than an hour a day – those who read 1-2 hours fell 0.12% and those who read more than 2 hours rose 0.35%), and the

percentage who believe that reading is not a waste of time has also fallen less than a percent. Furthermore, comparing PIRLS and PISA[178], the percentage of PIRLS adults who enjoyed reading more or less every day effectively held steady between 2001 and 2006 (up from 45% to 47%), as did the students (steady at 40%; 32% when fiction – stories or novels – was specified), a trend replicated in PISA students reading fiction several times a week (11.17% in 2000 to 12.17% in 2009) and more generally reading each day for pleasure.

What is clear is that reading on or via the internet has increased compared to other media, quite massively over the last two decades[179], and the new question appears to be how much is 'glass' (as in the fleeting example of Google Glass), a technologically-aided, potentially enhanced / altered way of reading, and how much mere spectacle? Certainly, PISA and PIRLS are still finding their feet in terms of the reading of digital narratives, the significance and interplay of various genres of text and the blurring of prior distinctions (audio, video + animation + illustration, 'traditional' writing vs. language-as-text, app vs. web page etc.). Potential complications also arise between concepts of reading for 'knowledge' or for 'pleasure', alternately viewed as 'applying knowledge creatively' (OECD) or 'reading for literary experience' (IEA).

To this end, both the PIRLS 2016 Assessment Framework and the documentation that has so far been released for PISA 2015 point to a new age of measuring digital reading. PIRLS 2016 will include two new assessments of reading comprehension, PIRLS Literacy ('to provide better measurement at the lower end of the scale') and ePIRLS, which will provide a simulated internet environment to assess online reading (IEA, 2015: 4-6). PISA 2015 will include 'computer-based collaborative problem solving', along with optional surveys of computer and financial literacy, and with the added proviso that new items and instruments will be limited to computer-based survey; the 'paper-and-pencil' option will from now on be limited to trend questions only (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2013f: 3-5). In short, with the experience moving inexorably toward the digital, further questions of narrative and fiction that specify or reify novels may, in fact, be misleading, may even miss the point.

*   *   *

> [Libraries] are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education (which is not a process that finishes the day we leave school or university), about entertainment, about making safe spaces, and about access to information. I worry that here in the 21st century people misunderstand what libraries are and the purpose of them. […] For all of human history, we have lived in a time of information scarcity, and having the needed information was always important, and always worth something […]. In the last few years, we've moved from an information-scarce economy to one driven by an information glut. According to Eric Schmidt of Google, every two days now the human race creates as much information as we did from the dawn of civilisation until 2003. […] The challenge becomes, not finding that scarce plant growing in the desert, but finding a specific plant growing in a jungle. We are going to need help navigating that information to find the thing we actually need.
>
> **Neil Gaiman, 'Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming' (*The Guardian*, 16/10/2013)**

These changes are nowhere more obvious than in the shifting uses of public libraries – while a decline in bricks-and-mortar bookstores can be connected to transnational / cross-cultural changes throughout the 'retail' sector (changes in how people consume products in a capitalist 'internet economy'), the public, collective approach to books and education reflected in public libraries is unique. While museums, galleries, theatres and various other public institutions and programs have all been influential in the circulation of knowledge and forms of communal enjoyment, the public library is second only to the public school in its historical relationship to the rise of literacy. Along with governments and trade unions – and, in a similarly contested fashion, the internet – it remains a key platform instrumental for the production of democracy.

The uses of libraries as contested spaces may strike people who do not use them as overblown rhetoric (little different from public parks – shared spaces serving a changing public good / utility), but again it needs to be read in the context of the long history. In the 18th century in Western countries (the United Kingdom and the United States, for example; later in Australia, obviously), public libraries were almost non-existent. Literate communities were primarily served by 'circulating' and 'subscription' libraries, taking a variety of forms – some were formed by communities who would pay for the books by paid subscription to the library, while others were business opportunities constructed by book-sellers to 'rent' books to those who could not afford them – or otherwise 'imagine' owning them.[180] Over a century or so these would help create the conditions for public libraries – literacy and widespread reading for entertainment, particularly fiction – and then give way to them (historically matched, as noted, by the proliferation of public schools).

The historical struggle to obtain public libraries (and, in the West, literacy) has often been discounted, compromised by ignorance or, at best, taken for granted, as Richard Hoggart argues in *The Way We Live Now*:

The Public Library is a magnificent mid-nineteenth century innovation now under attack from several sides; notably from the ideological-political, from that old error – populism mistaken for democracy, from relativism and low mercantilism. As may easily be shown: 'The public library service was set up to facilitate control of the literate proletariat by the newly-emerged capitalist class' […]. Behind that late-twentieth-century jargon there is some truth. But no social reform is quite so simple […]. When he presented to Parliament the Bill which became the Libraries Act of 1850, William Ewart argued that it was meant particularly to help the working classes, was 'for the cultivation of their minds, and the refinement of their tastes in science and art.' That point of view was as important in its time and as honestly meant as that of the control-theory. (Hoggart, 1995: 66-67)[181]

Schooling, for example, was also seen as a method of civic / religious control; with the notable exception of battles over public vs. private methods of schooling vs. funding, the public school is in little contemporary danger of disappearing, however. The library is somewhat more vulnerable. Hoggart argues against the deplorable trend for libraries to have to 'justify their existence' in a neoliberal, economic rationalist sense, but the practical or in-practice changes to libraries that are associated with that trend, particularly their free provision of the internet and ebooks, is no more problematic than the historical addition of other media: newspapers, magazines, microfilm and maps, or audio tapes and video tapes, CD-ROMs, CDs, DVDs and computer games – or media specific to a community – young adult, community languages, books on tape and so on. The provision of media and services (library as community hub and repository of information) evolves to meet perceived community needs; what is threatened, what is at stake, what reflects the changing practice of readership in a digital context, is precisely that of the library as ideology, as idea.

The real problem is not one implied by competing uses, such as the New York Public Library hosting gay weddings, teaching coding classes or being a reliquary for the skull of Percy Shelley or the death mask of Timothy Leary (Agresta, 2014; Monde, 2014; Lovejoy, 2013; Tucker, 2015) – or the New South Wales State Library opening a rooftop restaurant and choosing to 'house' more books 'off-site' (Wyndham, 2013; Juers, 2014). The problem is forsaking that guarantee of public access to knowledge that libraries in the 19th century came to represent. The internet, privately owned and operated and organised for the most part, makes no such guarantee (with the vital exception of sites / groups like Project Gutenberg, the Internet Archive and Open Library etc.) and while maintaining free, public access to the internet may prove essential for a socially dispossessed majority, the effacement and erasure of public libraries will ultimately socially dispossess all humanity.[182]

Which is to say, we should be far more concerned with continued, communal 'material' access than a simple declination in practices of reading (or potentially, merely, a diffusion of ways of reading). The author William H. Gass wrote in 'Gutenberg's Triumph: An Essay in Defense of the Book':

> Public libraries have succumbed to the same pressures that have overwhelmed the basic cultural functions of museums and universities, aims that should remain what they were, not because the old ways are always better but because in this case they were the right ones: the sustaining of standards, the preservation of quality, the conservation of literacy's history, the education of the heart, eye and mind. Now libraries devote far too much of their restricted space, and their limited budget, to public amusement. It is a fact of philistine life that amusement is where the money is. […] The sciences, it is alleged, no longer use books; neither do the professions, since what everyone needs is data, data day and night, because data, like drugs, soothe the senses and encourage us to think we are, when at the peak of their heap, on top of the world. Of course, libraries contain books, and books contain information, but [what…] matters is how the information is arranged, how it is understood and to what uses it is put. In short, what matters is the book the data are in. I just employed the expression 'It is a fact of philistine life…' That is exactly what the philistine would like the library to retrieve for it. Just the facts, ma'am. Because facts can be drawn from the jaws of some system like teeth; because facts are goods like shoes and shirts and, well, books. (Gass, 1999)

Gass's languishing, rose-coloured optimism verges on beatitude, and yet displays a critical cantankerousness that makes Richard Hoggart look equivocating. He is mistaken, however – the problem is not amusement or facts, it is access. In recent years, corporate entities like OverDrive and 3M Cloud Library Services have provided a bridging service (referred to as aggregation) for publishers to licence their digital content to libraries. Practices vary from country to country and company to company, but essentially libraries can 'choose' (i.e. pay for) content from the vast repositories managed by OverDrive / 3M / etc. who also provide proprietary or DRM-based methods for sharing these with library patrons. For example, files can be made accessible via library website or 'physically' (at the library) to an app or browser page on a patron's device or a borrowable library device; these files then disappear (become unreadable) in keeping with 'traditional' circulation strictures.[183] This attempt to artificially 'manage' the infinitely reproducible and shareable aspects of digital texts – to preserve the 'traditional' relationship between major publishers and libraries (and the 'threatened' existence thereof) – seems to represent the library in an interim / interregnum state.

According to a very short (one page – defiantly optimistic) discussion paper released by ALIA, the Australian Library and Information Association: "[Library] print and ebook collections will establish a 50:50 equilibrium by 2020 and […] this balance will be maintained for the foreseeable future" (by 'foreseeable future' they mean the lifespan of what they call the last 'print-only' generation, born circa 1990 – a reasonable assumption is that this may be radically different leading into the next century; ALIA, 2013). In another, much longer document, the 'Elending Landscape Report 2014' (prepared by Dan Mount from consultancy firm Civic Agenda), the various elending strategies employed globally (specifically focusing on trailblazing developments in Canada, the US, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden[184]) are laid out as potential options for Australian libraries.[185]

These vary substantially but are all informed by the obvious complication of replacing a material object, a book, with its digital 'virtually-immaterial' equivalent. The past practice of buying books, storing them, circulating them and, where necessary, disposing of them is being replaced by a model of leasing books for circulation but not in any traditional sense owning them or storing them – except, perhaps, in leased 'cloud space' – or disposing of them.[186] This is marked by what is termed as 'injecting friction' into the publisher-aggregator-library market, artificially limiting the number of patrons that can borrow a text at any particular time, or how long they can borrow it, or how much a library should pay for a new or popular work. As the report notes:

> Current differential pricing rates for ebooks offered to libraries, as opposed to consumers, certainly illustrates part of the problem. For example, in January 2014 the fourth bestselling ebook on the *New York Times* fiction list, *The Goldfinch*, is available to consumers via Amazon for US$7.50, but is only available to libraries via aggregators Overdrive and 3M for US$90.00 (a mark-up of 1,200%). (Mount, 2014a: 5)

Potential ploys to offset such pricing include monetising the book search process (what is termed 'the discovery layer') so that loan-or-buy options are made available for patrons on titles not licensed by their particular library, the formation of 'consortia' (sharing resources and costs inter-library within a regional, state or national system – subject to artificial 'friction', of course) and the taking on of costs of digitising 'backlist' titles (that is, not currently commercially available content nonetheless desired by libraries and their patrons) in exchange for free, if limited, lending rights or a reduced rate on 'frontlist', i.e. current, titles. Ultimately, as already noted, the models vary substantially. Some have patrons paying directly for popular content or libraries paying 'per click' but with unlimited access to an aggregator's resources (rather than 'per book' – subscription models, in other words), whereas some examples have libraries producing 'in house' digital content platforms which, to some extent, circumvent the limitations imposed by

'third-party distributors' (aggregators) in providing public domain, self-published, minor publishing house or other works.[187]

Librarians, like publishers, have a vested interest in (and vested knowledge of) the critical intersection between the future of literacy and the future of the book. At their peak strength – in the form of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, or IFLA – librarians have taken the fight to the UN (UNESCO) that free access to information should be intrinsic to the post-2015 development agenda, as important as literacy, its necessary counterpart.[188] Similarly radically, the IFLA in 2013 argued for a 'principled' approach to future ebook lending:

> (i) A library must have the right to license and/or purchase any commercially available eBook without embargo. If titles are withheld from the library market by publishers and/or authors, national legislation should require such access under reasonable terms and conditions. […]

> (ii) A library must have access to eBooks under reasonable terms and conditions and at a fair price. […]

> (iii) eBook licensing / purchase options must respect copyright limitations and exceptions available to libraries and their users in national law, such as the right to: (a) Copy a portion of the work. (b) Re-format the work for preservation purposes if it is licensed and/or purchased for permanent access. (c) Provide a temporary copy of the work to another library in response to a user request. (d) Reformat a work to enable access for people with print disabilities. (e) By-pass a technological protection measure for the purpose of exercising any non-infringing purpose.

> (iv) eBooks available to libraries should be platform neutral and developed with standards for accessibility. […]

> (v) Strategies must be in place to ensure the long term preservation of eBook titles by libraries. Long term availability of eBook titles should not be compromised by factors such as a publisher ceasing to operate. This can be addressed through measures including the collaborative development of archival databases by publishers and libraries and legislative solutions which require the legal deposit of digital content with specified agencies.

> (vi) eBook services must protect the privacy of library users. […]. (IFLA, 2013a)

In short, the IFLA argued for a public right to read books without DRM restrictions, without platform / device restrictions, and for the right of libraries to own – not merely

lease – digital copies of books.[189] Perhaps most intriguingly, in arguing for the privacy of library users they were also arguing against unrestricted 'ereader feedback'. For librarians this must be a difficult decision as ereader feedback could provide the most complete and coherent data possible on how – and in what ways – human beings actually practice reading, yet it is so obviously susceptible to potential abuse by corporations and governments.

In the near past, one could go to any public library and read or borrow their books (or borrow through a local library on an inter-library loan) and go to any number of private libraries, such as academic libraries, and at least read their books there. In the near future, if the IFLA falter or fail, the library becoming a mere aggregation point for a limited stream of temporary digital files delineated by 'friction', by artificial scarcity, is the far more worrying 'access' scenario emphasised by the (im)possibilities of 'immaterial' holdings. At a point in history in which all the books in all the libraries of the world could be accessed from any library, every library, and all their knowledge shared, we are still being driven into isolation and disconnectedness.

In July, 1997, Ted Hughes wrote a poem, only recently published, that ends with these lines (Sieghart, 2013: 4):

> Where any nation starts awake
> Books are the memory. And it's plain
> Decay of libraries is like
> Alzheimer's in the nation's brain.
>
> And in my own day in my own land
> I have heard the fiery whisper: 'We are here
> To destroy the Book
> To destroy the rooted stock of the Book […]'
>
> For this one's dreams and that one's acts,
> For all who've failed or aged beyond
> The reach of teachers, here are found
> The inspiration and the facts.
>
> As we all know and have heard all our lives
> Just as we've heard that here.
>
> Even the most misfitting child
> Who's chanced upon the library's worth,
> Sits with the genius of the Earth

And turns the key to the whole world.

Hear it again.[190]

CHAPTER SIX: 'GOING BY THE BOOK (A CAELO USQUE AD CENTRUM)': PUBLISHING STATISTICS AND THE FUTURE OF A PUBLIC DOMAIN

When Milton sold the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* on 27th April, 1667 for £5 to Samuel Simmons, he was promised another £5 by Simmons if the first edition of 1,300 copies sold out, and the same sum was to be given to him when the second and third editions, should they be printed, sold out.

Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800* (1984: 164)

Simmons's copy of the contract [...] seems to have been passed on to the bookseller Jacob Tonson when that marketing genius acquired the full copyright to *Paradise Lost* (in two separate steps, in 1683 and 1691). Thereafter, the contract remained, no doubt as proof of possession of the copyright, in the hands of the Tonson family until 1768, along with the manuscript of Book I of the poem. The third generation Jacob Tonson even used it as evidence in a court action to frighten off a prospective publisher of Milton's poem in 1739, well after the Copyright Act's prescribed twenty-one years had elapsed.

Peter Lindenbaum, quoted in Martin Kretschmer, Lionel Bently and Ronan Deazley's *The History of Copyright History: Notes from an Emerging Discipline*, the introduction to their work (editors) *Privilege and Property: Essays on the History of Copyright* (2010: 7)[191]

Recently a company called Spritz Inc developed a method of streaming text word by word (up to thirteen characters at a time) which aims to facilitate speed-reading, especially on compact devices. While speed-reading is hardly a new idea, the technology is interesting as an example of a changing culture of readership – for where the page, the paragraph, even the sentence is cut down to size, there are bound to be ramifications for what kinds of narrative and what kinds of knowledge can abide or thrive in such a system (so, arguably, there would not only be smaller devices but shorter texts, shorter sentences etc.). Although no commercial application for fiction has been attempted, the idea that one could read the first *Harry Potter* novel in 77 minutes (Kleinman, 2014) raises challenging questions about what we read and why.

Spritz is only a symptom, of course – the real changes to the publishing industry in the last two decades have been much more fundamental. Data feedback is only part of it, too – the rise of Apple, Amazon, and Google and their legal battles in the book trade, the concordant fall of 'traditional' booksellers, the merging of Penguin and Random House, and new communities of readers, new ways of funding books, selling books, promoting books, etc., have laid a whole new playing field for publishing. Indeed, though on a vastly more visible and innovative scale, in many ways the extraordinary success of Amazon is also only a symptom: the changing technology has flattened the field ('levelled' would be inaccurate) and Amazon has skilfully 'played on'.

In particular, we can see the question raised by Spritz finding some commercial expression at Amazon. On their labyrinthine websites (for they know how to blockade a market), these are only some of the voluminous approaches to be found: 'Short Reads: Great Stories in One Sitting' ('Browse by Reading Time: 15 minutes | 30 minutes | 45 minutes | One hour | 90 minutes | 2 hours or more'), Kindle Singles (approximately 500 novella-length fiction books and 1500 non-fiction), StoryFront ("dedicated to high-quality short fiction for readers looking to discover new voices, experiment with genres, or find a great quick read"), Day One ("a weekly literary journal dedicated to short fiction from debut writers, English translations of stories from around the world, and poetry"; introduced at $0.37 per issue and now into its third year) and more – always more (Amazon, 2013a, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). In fact, no matter what kind of reader you are, or are becoming, they want your business. For example, if you join Amazon Prime, their premium delivery and subscription service, you can also read any book, one per month or thereabouts, from their Kindle Owner's Lending Library of 800,000 titles at $10.99; as of mid-2014, for $9.99 a month you can alternately subscribe to Kindle Unlimited and borrow from a list of 1,000,000 titles and thousands of audio books (Amazon, 2015, 2016d).

Ultimately, the part of this that really matters for this thesis is the measurement of the size and shape of the ebook and ereader markets. Still, as having a context, a history, has been central to the understanding of the developments discussed thus far, looking at ebook publishing as a way of describing the future of novels seems no different. Using a 'long history' is unnecessary, however, in this instance – whilst concepts such as 'self-publishing', 'distributed authorship', 'crowdsourcing' and 'crowdfunding' are no doubt extensively established, they have greatly grown in practice in the digital era. Compare the Kindle Owner's Lending Library / Kindle Unlimited to, say, 18th-century subscription libraries, where patrons paid to belong and to borrow; or the contemporary reading and writing communities discussed in the previous section (Wattpad, Baen, Subutai) to, say, the early 20th-century relationship between the Bloomsbury Group and the Hogarth Press. They are radically different approaches to the production and consumption of literature as a result of the new technology.

The first big change, to crib a little from China Miéville, would be 'the new author', an idea which ranges in scope from practically everyone who expresses themselves on the internet, however crudely, to those who self-publish for profit (or who freely self-publish and thereafter somehow profit), through to the ongoing adaptation of the 'traditional author' to the new environment (see Miéville, 2012; Kozlowski, 2014a; Greenfield, 2014a). This is closely linked to another collapsing category, 'the new bookseller / publisher'. This category now ranges from subscription websites and print-on-demand and print by crowdfunding, to the behemoth online retailers and their smaller

counterparts, increasingly including the major publishers themselves, encircling the even smaller 'traditional booksellers', both chain and independent.

If these 'new' categories seem overly inclusive, luckily recent events allow us to considerably summarise for the ebook market in particular. The 'Big Six', the largest 'trade' book publishing houses who publish substantially in English – Penguin, Hachette, Random House, Macmillan, HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster[192] – all had their roots in publishing houses reaching back to the 19th and early 20th centuries but their corporate consolidation mostly took place in the 1990s. Recently, in 2013, the merger of Penguin and Random House (via their 'parent' companies, Pearson, the largest publisher in the world, and Bertelsmann, respectively) reduced this to a 'Big Five' and an aborted merger between HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster almost reduced it to four (News Corp tried to buy S&S from CBS; this failed, so News Corp instead bought Harlequin in 2014; see Seward, 2012; Greenfield, 2014b; Greenfield, 2014c).

These five publishers, along with retailers Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, and, to some extent, Google and Rakuten Kobo, predictably make up most of the English-language ebook market. However, it should be noted that as much as it is a driver of, and concomitantly driven by, changes to the publishing industry globally, the ebook market is still only a slice of the publishing industry (and English-language ebooks only a slice of that). Let us start with dimensions, or, more correctly, depth perceptions.[193] Rüdiger Wischenbart, consulting for the International Publishers Association (IPA; their peak body) in their 'Annual Report October 2012 – October 2013', writes:

> Readers from around the world spend an estimated €114 billion on books per year. This amount includes not just print and digital editions of various kinds of trade books (like fiction, nonfiction and children's books), but also many sorts of educational materials, as well as professional and scientific publications. The consumption – and in many places: the availability – of books is far from even across the almost 200 countries worldwide. On the contrary, with a combined value of close to €70 billion, the six largest book markets [in 2012] – the United States, China, Germany, Japan, France and Great Britain – together account for over 60% of the global spending on books [...].[194] In 2012, e-books worth US$3.5 billion were sold in the United States, equalling 13% of all publishers' combined net sales. [By contrast, in...] the United Kingdom, digital revenues were worth £411 million, as compared to £2,932 million for sales of physical books. In a largely mature publishing market which has seen declining revenues in recent years, digital sales clearly helped balance the losses in revenue from printed books for the first time in the UK in 2012. This is even more remarkable as e-books only started to gain

significant market share in North America and Great Britain as recently as 2010. (Wischenbart, 2013: 15-17)

While the US is by far the largest national market for books and the largest market for ebooks, this may soon change.[195] In 2015, China produced more than 448,000 new titles and book sales of over US$1 billion (IPA, 2016: 6-7; BIZ Beijing, 2016: 1). According to reports at BookExpo America, China's book market is now valued at 62.4 billion yuan (US$9.6 billion; and, with library sales, 74 billion yuan), with growth up 12.8% from 2014, and there are approximately 1.68 million titles currently available in the market (current sales figures put fiction at about 12.1% of paper and 13.4% of digital markets). Translated titles and imports comprise 21.68% of the market, with American and UK authors accounting for 57% of import sales to 300 million English-language readers. There are also 300 million mobile phone users who read on their devices. These are supported by platforms like iReader Beijing, which claims 78 million active users purchasing 60 million e-books every month – they also claim to pay, via self-publishing, a staggering 1.5 million writers, either per title or on 'a pay-as-you-read model priced at 1 cent per 2,000 words' (Nawotka, 2016; BIZ Beijing, 2015: 5; BIZ Beijing, 2016: 2).

Amazon dominates the global market for the distribution of books and ebooks via the internet and, as Jeremy Greenfield reported for *Forbes* in 2014, it has changed the whole industry:

> According to recent reports, Amazon controls nearly 80% of ebook sales in the UK. It's thought to have about a 67% market-share in the US (although anyone who tells you they know this for sure is ignorant, lying or both […]). […] Amazon is most every publisher's biggest trading partner – and its toughest one. It nearly single-handedly pushed the book-publishing industry into the digital era by introducing Kindle in 2007 and building the ebook business. It continues to grow and innovate, launching new products, devices, business models and technologies at a dizzying pace, at one point almost one new announcement every day. It now is also a direct competitor of publishers, with its own publishing house, Amazon Publishing […]. [Smart] publishers have sought to partner with Amazon rather than fight the company. Even smarter publishers are finding their own ways to diversify the way they sell books. […] Penguin Random House […] recently launched My Independent Bookshop, which is a new platform where readers can make, share and browse bookshelves of their favorite books or books on themes. They can also buy books through the platform, with credit for sales going toward their favorite local bookstore. (Greenfield, 2014d)

'Platforms', to clarify, is a way of describing the integration of sales channels, social media, reader-author interactivity and reader feedback (ergo, 'platforms' goes beyond a traditional view of websites to update how people relate to their 'devices'). The two most successful platforms are probably GoodReads and Wattpad – neither belongs to the Big Five. GoodReads was bought by Amazon in 2013, somewhat predictably, and began promoting discounted ebooks to targeted users in 2016 (see Pandell, 2016; while Wattpad would be hard-pressed to function as a sales channel for anyone except individual authors).[196]

Beyond this broad view, questions arise. As noted, traditional publishers do not release figures of novels sold, as opposed to other types of fiction – in fact, publishers rarely publicly distinguish between sales of fiction and non-fiction and not always even between 'trade' and other kinds of publishing. Individual success stories (*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Fifty Shades*, etc.) are promoted and the odd, occasional detail will escape but, generally speaking, there is no exact way to properly measure the global market for ebook novels. If you had the statistical resources (if you could afford to pay for trade secrets), you could start by comparing how many books are published and how many copies printed or sold with how many ebooks are published, made accessible, and how many copies of those accessed or sold / licensed (for national markets by comparison, see Wischenbart, 2016). What percentage of revenue for each product type – ebooks vs. books vs. licensing and related revenues – this entails could then be calculated; accounting for novels per se is obviously more elusive.

Here is a snapshot: the world's leading trade book publisher, Penguin Random House, comprising nearly 250 imprints and brands on five continents, was formed in 2013 by Bertelsmann (53%) and Pearson (47%). As of 2014, it sold 800 million print, audio and ebooks annually. Revenue reported (2010-2014) was as follows: $4,046 million (2014), $3,664m (2013), $3,328m (2012), $2,274m (2011), $3,844m (2010). Revenue share from ebooks was 20% globally in 2014 (US 30%, Germany 15%), with over 100 million ebooks sold (steady from 2013) and 100,000 titles on offer, rising from 77,000 in 2013, 47,000 in 2012, pre-merger, and 40,000 in 2011. Random House had previously reported ebooks as 22% of worldwide income (2012: US 25%, UK 22%), buoyed in part by the sale of 70 million print and digital copies of the *Fifty Shades* trilogy (Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2014a, 2014c, 2015a, 2015c).[197]

Hachette Livre published 20,359 titles in 2014, under more than 150 imprints, and in more than 70 countries. Revenue reported (2010-2014) was as follows: $2,439 million (2014), $2,851m (2013), $2,833m (2012), $2,649m (2011), $2,873m (2010). Revenue share from ebooks was 9% globally in 2015 (US 22%, UK 26%) down from 10.3% in 2014 (US 26%, UK 31%). Digital was 26% of trade sales in the US in 2014 (down from 30% in 2013) and 31% in the UK (up from 27%); Hachette ebooks accounted for 10% of all sales

in 2012 and 8% of revenue (up from 6% in 2011). Hachette's digital catalogue stands at 26,000 digitized titles available in France, 25,000 in the UK and 7,000 from the Hachette US Book Group (Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2013a, 2013c 2014a, 2014d, 2015a, 2015d).[198]

The Holtzbrinck Publishing Group publishes both print and electronic media in 138 countries. Revenue is reported as follows: $2,000 million (2014), $2,222m (2013), $2,220m (2012), $1,952m (2011), $1,512m (2010). As a family-owned company, Holtzbrinck share almost no financial details publicly. However, in 2014, all Holtzbrinck publishing revenues was reported at €1.64 billion, against €1.61 billion in the previous year, of which Macmillan reported €721m. Digital sales represented 27% of Macmillan Publishers' total revenue in 2013. As of 2013 their digital backlist held 11,000 titles and their whole catalogue (front- and backlist) was reported as 15,000 in 2014 (Albanese, 2013b; *DBW*, 2014; Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2013a, 2013d, 2014a, 2014e, 2015a, 2015e).

News Corp subsidiary HarperCollins is the second-largest consumer book publisher in the world. Revenue reported (2010-2015) was as follows: $1,667 million (2015), $1,434m (2014), $1,369m (2013), $1,189m (2012), $1,110m (2011), $1,269m (2010). In 2014, the company reported $88 million in sales, mainly from 19 million net unit sales of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series (35% of which were e-book sales). HarperCollins offered 35,000 ebook titles as of mid-2014; revenue from ebooks in 2014 and 2015 was 22% annually, up from 19% in 2013, 16% in 2012, and 12% in 2011 (at that point their catalogue listed 8,750 ebooks; Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2013a, 2013e, 2014a, 2014f, 2015a, 2015f).

Simon & Schuster became the trade publishing division of the CBS Corporation in 2006, and publishes over 2,000 titles annually from 35 imprints. Revenue reported (2010-2015) was as follows: $780 million (2015), $778m (2014), $809m (2013), $790m (2012), $787m (2011), $791m (2010). Revenue share from digital content, including audio downloads, was reported as 25% in 2015, 26.4% in 2014 and 27.1% in 2013 (riding high on the paradoxical successes of *Duck Dynasty* and *The Great Gatsby*), 23% in 2012 and 17% (or $133 million) in 2011 (Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2012c, 2013a, 2014a, 2014g, 2015a, 2015g).

If the picture remains blurry, it is undoubtedly partly by design; happily, due to Hugh Howey's Author Earnings project some details are becoming less opaque. Launched in early 2014, Author Earnings is a public website which gathers and shares publishing industry information and advocates for 'better pay and fairer terms' for authors.[199] To achieve this, Howey releases reports of publishing data collected from Amazon and other online retailers, comparing sales data (price, units) for independent publishers,

uncategorised single-author publishers, small to medium-sized publishers, Amazon, and the Big Five. Beginning with only 7,000 Amazon bestsellers, Howey and his partner have now grown to a million distinct data points (crunching the numbers on "250 high-powered 8-core servers"; AE, 2016a; AE, 2016b).

While Howey's early approach was limited (analysing only online retailer data, and only for a single day at a time; see Shatzkin, 2014a; Weinberg, 2014), his attempt to publicly understand and share something which has long been considered 'a secret of the trade' is sincerely admirable. Certainly, as the project has grown the kinds of analysis possible have become far-reaching. Using figures from the International Publishers Association, Howey notes that while the US makes up only 30% of the global book publishing market (more than 10% through Amazon in the US alone), and the remainder of the top ten brings it to 75% (China 10%, Germany 9%, Japan 7%, the UK and France with 4% each, Italy and Spain 3%, and Brazil and India 2%), the US makes up well over half of the world's digital book market. And because 37% of the ebooks sold through Amazon in the US (and 25% sold through amazon.co.uk, by the way) lack Bowker-issued International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) identifiers[200], Amazon in fact accounts for 74% of all US ebook purchases and 71% of all consumer dollars spent on ebooks in the US. The remaining percentages are as follows: Apple iBookstore 12% sales, 11% units; the Barnes & Noble Nook store 9% sales, 8% units, the Kobo US bookstore 4% sales, 3% units, and GooglePlay Books 2% sales, 2% units. (AE, 2015e, 2015f, 2016b)

Howey can now state with some accuracy, contrary to Greenfield's bewilderment in 2014, what Amazon's sales looks like, even by genre – and, given time and motivation, all online retailers in all markets, covering all online print and digital sales. One snapshot in 2016 revealed the following: 969,000 print books sold each day (Amazon sells at least 25% of all new trade print books and handles roughly 66% of online trade print sales), 119,000 audiobooks sold each day (worth roughly $2.1 million), and ebook sales of 1,064,000 paid downloads a day (worth $5.75 million a day or more than $2.1 billion a year).[201] (AE, 2016a)

Turning to ereaders and tablets, Barnes & Noble had reportedly sold over 10 million Nooks by 2014 and offered more than 3 million ebooks for sale (426,000 were added in 2013 alone). They also made a deal with Samsung to sell a million ereaders within 12 months of launching a co-branded product but presumably did not meet the target and have been forced to renegotiate (Huseby, 2014; B&N, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2016). In the year 2011-2012, Nook device sales rose 45% and ebook sales for the Nook rose 119% (overall, Nook devices and ebooks generated $1.3 billion, compared with $880 million the previous year). At the time, Barnes & Noble accounted for 25% to 30% of the ebook market through the Nook (Alter, 2012; see also Fletcher, 2014).

Amazon's Kindles (even the diversity of these devices in some sense deserves a plural – 18 separate models in nine years[202]) are more of a mystery, as the company notoriously refuses to release sales data for the Kindle.[203] The clearest picture comes from the International Data Corporation (IDC). In 2010, they reported 12.8 million ereaders being shipped in the global market (up 325% from 2009, when roughly 3 million units shipped; in 2010, Amazon had a 48% share, roughly 6 million). Over the next three years, these numbers contracted globally as most consumers chose tablets over ereaders.[204] As of 2011, IDC tracked Amazon's Kindle Fire (a tablet) – in fourth quarter 2011 (4Q11) they shipped 4.7 million units (15.9% market share), in fourth quarter 2012 (4Q12) they shipped 5.9 million (9.9%) and in fourth quarter 2013 (4Q13) they shipped 3.4 million (7.6%). In the comparable period, Apple shipped 15.5 million (4Q11; 51.7% of 29.9 million total tablets shipped globally), 22.9 million (4Q12; 38.2% of 60 million total tablets shipped globally) and 26.0 million (4Q13; 33.8% of 76.9 million total tablets shipped globally) respectively – by far the market leader.[205]

As for retailer ebook figures, Amazon states it has more than 4.5 million titles ('over a million at $2.99', and including their Kindle eBook Exclusives – "over 1 million digital titles you won't find anywhere else"). As of 2016, they also appeared to offer 32 million new books and 33 million used books (Amazon, 2016e, 2016f, 2016g, 2016h). Furthermore, Amazon also provides access to millions of free ebooks at the Internet Archive / Open Library and Project Gutenberg.[206] Apple claims to have 2.5 million available in its iBooks(tore) and in 2015, according to the company, Apple customers had finally downloaded their billionth book (Apple, 2016a; Wischenbart, 2016: 136-137). Rakuten Kobo ("Content is King") claims to have 5 million ebooks and magazines in 77 languages (Kobo, 2016; see also Wischenbart, 2016: 138).

Volume is not the only consideration, even beyond ereader vs. tablet sales, or Amazon's millions of books vs. the 130 million once-existing / still extant books that Google estimated in 2010. There are other differences, visible to readers. For example, since 2011 Amazon has offered discounted Kindles that display advertisements (higher-priced models do not). Alternatively, Barnes & Noble introduced a 'read in store' promotion where if you bring your Nook to one of their stores you can read any Nook book free, for up to an hour a day, using wifi (Kozlowski, 2011; Fagioli, 2015). In a way, reflecting on corporate attitudes towards customers is perhaps as instructive as all these numbers when contemplating the future. Similarly, alongside the hard data in the IDC reports there were also forecasts and predictions, enough to give a partial vision of the immediate future. Firstly, the ereader / tablet markets have reached some kind of saturation point, in the US at least (most people who wanted them – and could afford them – had by now acquired them; the remainder were increasingly turning to 'phablets' – smartphones with 5.5-inch and larger screens – or detachable 2-in-1's, PCs that

converted to tablet use). Secondly, there is a clear trend towards wearable, or even embedded, computers (something like Google Glass, running something like Spritz, perhaps).[207]

Although this picture of the technological travails of the 'new publishers and retailers' is still incomplete[208], to understand it in context we ought to turn back a page and consider again the 'new author' and their 'new novel' – not so much, as in the 'speculative' chapters, imagining how new forms of technology relate to potentially new forms of writing, but, as things stand now, how the new technology is changing the material relationship between publishers and authors and audiences and texts. Jon Fine, Amazon's Director of Author and Publishing Relations, made an interesting (if predictable for Amazon) argument:

> People talk about self-publishing versus traditional publishing. I actually think those labels are becoming somewhat archaic. At the end of the day, what we're going to see is an incredible empowerment of opportunities for authors. […] 70% is what we pay our authors when they publish books on our site and I think what we're trying to do is say, 'Okay, the most important relationship […] here is between authors, content creators, and readers and anybody else who is in that relationship really needs to bring value.' […] As an initial matter, for authors, they set the price in self-published works. […] Even here in the UK, in any given week, say the 100 top titles in digital, 21 of those are self-published books. In the US, 30 titles out of the top 100 [ebooks] every week […] are published independently. In India, which is where this has just started, it's 20% already – every week – of the top ebooks, 20 of them are independently published, so it's a very powerful market. (Day, 2014; see also Streitfeld, 2012)

Of course, in a culture tentatively investigating the possibilities of distributed authorship et al., Fine's labels are also arguably approaching archaic (see also Vinjamuri, 2012). Macmillan, for example, has found an interesting way to outsource a great deal of the process. Sandy Hall's *A Little Something Different* (2014) was first written and fostered (edited, published) in the Swoon Reads online community (which is the coal-face of a Macmillan imprint, Feiwel And Friends), where members with a shared interest in romantic fiction submit, read and comment on each other's work. Popular and polished works are then picked up for publication (MCPG, 2014). Faber & Faber have done something similar with Unbound, updating the model of the subscription library:

> Authors upload their ideas to unbound.co.uk and readers then choose the ideas that they like and pledge their support (from £10 to funding the entire book). Once the idea has enough supporters, the book is written and

supporters receive a clothbound limited Unbound First Edition with their name in it. Supporters can track the creative process via the author's private area or 'shed', where they can read the author's blog, watch interviews and meet other supporters. […] Authors receive 50% of all profits from Unbound books – much higher than they currently receive from e-book sales. (Solon, 2011)

Even more impressive than these new ways of writing, editing, financing or publishing is the 3,000 Russian volunteer proof-readers who checked 46,800 pages of Tolstoy's writing (comparing scanned PDFs to OCR text) so that the Leo Tolstoy State Museum could release their definitive 90-volume jubilee edition of his work, overseen by his great-great-granddaughter Fyokla Tolstaya (McGrane, 2013). Like medieval monks toiling in the archetypal scriptorium, people all over the world – all over the internet – are producing and publishing the works they are invested in. If, for now, a traditional view of the individual author and the monolithic publishing house prevails, it is par for the capitalist course. And if, for now, the success stories of self-publishing have offered up E.L. James and Hugh Howey, we have to recognise the potential for the new field to also help us locate and celebrate the Dickinsons, Kafkas, Poes and John Kennedy Tooles of the future, and potentially the past. However, all those names, vaunted or venal, are outliers, anomalies, blips – while dazzling, they also somewhat distort the picture of the new author, the new playing field. As Howey's project has demonstrated, the 'big-picture' future is probably going to belong to increasingly niche novelists finding their increasingly engaged audiences. In the meantime, 'traditional' publishing has a fight on its hands.

*   *   *

I keep hoping the corporations will wake up and realize that publishing is not, in fact, a normal business with a nice healthy relationship to capitalism. Elements of publishing are, or can be forced to be, successfully capitalistic: the textbook industry is all too clear a proof of that. […] But inevitably some of what publishers publish is, or is partly, literature – art. And the relationship of art to capitalism is, to put it mildly, vexed. It has not been a happy marriage. Amused contempt is about the pleasantest emotion either partner feels for the other. Their definitions of what profiteth a man are too different.

Ursula Le Guin, 'Staying Awake: Notes on the alleged decline of reading' (*Harper's Magazine*; February, 2008)

For the last four years, we've had the best profit margins in our history and as long as we find amazing writers and we connect them to as big an audience as possible, we will succeed. […] Publishing is an incredibly exhilarating industry. It's about taking controlled risks with the most important product in the world, which is the book.

Tom Weldon, Chief Executive of Penguin Random House UK, interviewed at the London Book Fair, on 'In Business: Has the book a future', *Peter Day's World of Business* podcast, (*BBC Radio 4*; 18/04/2014)[209]

Big pictures are not made solely of dimensions – there are questions of scope and detail, of meaning. In May, 2014, as a result of legal obligations following from actions by, amongst others, the European Union and the United States Department of Justice investigating ebook price fixing by Apple and the Big Five, Hachette was forced to renegotiate its contract with Amazon.[210] These negotiations quickly ended up in a deadlock (they had likely begun as a deadlock, all things considered[211]) and Amazon responded by effectively removing the ability of their customers to buy Hachette titles. While Hachette's long-term success in ensuring an agency pricing model may or may not eventuate in the manner intended (AE, 2016a), both companies made striking public statements at the time. Amazon blogged on its Kindle Forum:

> At Amazon, we do business with more than 70,000 suppliers, including thousands of publishers. One of our important suppliers is Hachette, which is part of a $10 billion media conglomerate. Unfortunately, despite much work from both sides, we have been unable to reach mutually acceptable agreement on terms. […] When we negotiate with suppliers, we are doing so on behalf of customers. Negotiating for acceptable terms is an essential business practice that is critical to keeping service and value high for customers in the medium and long term. […] If you do need one of the affected titles quickly, we regret the inconvenience and encourage you to purchase a new or used version from one of our third-party sellers or from one of our competitors. […] We also take seriously the impact it has when, however infrequently, such a business interruption affects authors. […] This topic has generated a variety of coverage [, some expressing a relatively narrow point of view], presumably in part because the negotiation is with a book publisher instead of a supplier of a different type of product. (Amazon Books Team, 2014a; see also Shepard, 2014)

This 'proportional' response – books as a type of product – was countered by Hachette, almost immediately:

> It is good to see Amazon acknowledge that its business decisions significantly affect authors' lives. For reasons of their own, Amazon has limited its customers' ability to buy more than 5,000 Hachette titles. Authors, with whom we at Hachette have been partners for nearly two centuries, engage in a complex and difficult mission to communicate with readers. In addition to royalties, they are concerned with audience, career, culture, education, art, entertainment, and connection. By preventing its customers from connecting with these authors' books, Amazon indicates that it considers books to be like any other consumer good. They are not. (*Publishers Weekly*, 2014h)

However complicated the issue (which is, in truth, global and centuries-old), however smugly self-serving their comments are, Hachette are nonetheless right. As Le Guin argues, books-literature-art are not a product like everything else, not even the 'most important product', as Weldon claims; neither are music, movies, television, art or culture, for that matter. You can sell them as a mere product but you mistake them if you do – Amazon's position, to put it obliquely, embodies the price of everything and the value of nothing.[212]

But there's another answer, too. While Amazon and Hachette alternately invoke the sanctity of the 'customer' and the 'reader' and, similarly, register the 'value' vs. 'importance' of the author, the narratives they reference – Amazon's folksy 'stack it high' storefront and Hachette's ancient muses 'education, art, entertainment' – are both versions of the same impulse to humanise the business of 'new publishing'. Neither said, 'we are impelled by virtue of our shareholders to ask for more money', and neither would likely have thought that the full story even if they had. At the International Publishers' Congress in 2016, Hachette Livre CEO Arnaud Nourry told their side of it again:

> Nobody is asking questions about the future of wine, so why can't we stop agonizing about the future of books? […] As recently as five years ago, all manner of self-proclaimed experts predicted the demise of the printed book. Publishers, they said, would at best have to scrap their distribution facilities and become little more than online marketers. At worst, they would disappear altogether, swept away by the wave of self-publishing. It just did not happen. We are the only 'media' industry to have successfully ridden the first digital wave. The end of the bubble notwithstanding, our industry is stronger than ever, and you know why: In a world overflowing with data, works and opinions, people need familiar landmarks more than ever – brands that act as quality labels and ensure that the goods on offer have been curated, checked, approved and deemed worthy of their attention and money by people who put their reputation and livelihood on the line by doing so. (Anderson, 2016)

However, in condemning legislative proposals adopted by the European Commission in 2015 (European Commission, 2015a; European Commission, 2015b) that aimed to overcome copyright limitations in media streaming and geo-blocking – but also to facilitate the digitisation of 'out-of-commerce' works and make them available online, including across the EU – Nourry decried what he called a 'senseless attack' on copyright, adding: "Vast exceptions to copyright law for libraries, for education, for fair use—think of the devastating consequences they would have on European publishers if they were allowed to pass […]." (Albanese, 2016) Raising the spectre of Google Books as a

commercial enterprise is one thing[213]; conflating the merit of libraries with the danger of piracy was a misstep too far. The IFLA responded:

> It was a great shame that Hachette Livre CEO Arnaud Nourry chose to target libraries at the International Publishers' Congress this week […]. In particular, we, the library community, reject entirely the argument that we are proxies for the commercial sector. If libraries are for profit, it is for the profit of human development. […] We are there to protect and promote the interests of our users – citizens, creators, students – rather than shareholders. (IFLA, 2016a)

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The one exception to the [Harper Brothers; now HarperCollins] firm's monopoly of Dickens's novels was *Hard Times*. T.L. McElrath, who was the publisher of the American edition of *Household Words*, purportedly paid Dickens $1,500 for the right of advance sheets of the novel, a price Harpers would not pay. The work was published on August 8, 1854, and sold for twenty-five cents a copy. Furious with McElrath's violation of their assumed rights to Dickens's works, Harper Brothers typeset the short novel overnight and published an edition in wrappers the next day at half the price of McElrath's edition and ruined the young publisher. No firm challenged Harper's claim on Dickens again. In December, the firm published a second edition.

Walter E. Smith, *Charles Dickens: A Bibliography of his First American Editions 1836-1870* (2012: xxvii)

In the end, even with data I'm just another 'scholar with an opinion' (to rephrase Andreas Schleicher, one of the developers of PISA).[214] What resonated for me from the statistical approach was the under-examined presence of ideology in determining the future history of literature and the novel via the measuring of literacy in 'developed' / 'developing' countries, the detailed measurement vs. considered purpose of literacy, the public vs. private ownership of books / knowledge (as seen with libraries) and the struggle for market dominance in publishing in this new century. I can't pretend I'm either uninterested or disinterested – indifferent or impartial – in my assessment of the present and the challenges it presents to the future. Embracing my bias, I write as an avid student of the history of fiction, curious and concerned about the development of its forms.

In terms of change and continuity, competition between Amazon and the major publishers is similar in character, if broader in scope, to other periods of book trade history – Manutius fighting off his piratical competitors in the 15th century, say, or Milton's publishers at war in the legal disputes known as the 'battle of the booksellers' in the 18th century, and the widespread Transatlantic and Intercontinental publishing piracy of the 19th century that concerned Dickens[215], Hugo[216] and Twain[217], and that led eventually to the agreements of international copyright which mostly[218] flourished in the 20th century.[219] That the digital era produces similar conflict, then, is entirely unsurprising,

and that the fate of the novel (whether 'enovel' or paper novel – 'pnovel'?) is of little global moment, even less so.[220] At the same time, the question of literacy remains vital, if arguably somewhat detached from the question of literature.

This detachment is the ideological hinge, however, on which all the other questions move. 'Literacy', describing a mere mechanical ability (sufficient for capitalism, perhaps, although arguably insufficient for the development of meaningful democracy), has no particular need for a 'literature' in the sense that it has historically hitherto existed – literature is, in this analysis, only a product, a good like any other. 'Literacy', on the other hand, describing a creative and critical faculty, does have such a need – and 'literature', in this analysis, is truly *a* good, it has value, it is a productive force. In addition, in this globally interconnected, interdependent century, what will better allow us to communicate, to speak in a common tongue, than a cultural commons, a public domain? Paradoxically, this is more at risk than it has been in centuries – just as we as a species develop a technology which could easily and instantly share the benefits and wisdom of our histories and our cultures, we baulk at the economic costs / 'losses' entailed in the technology and start locking up everything within arm's reach.[221]

This is the risk inherent in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a free trade agreement between Pacific Rim countries (America, Japan, Australia etc.) that had been percolating for years but which was signed in February, 2016 (although not yet ratified[222]). Leaked documents from early negotiations outlined potential international agreements with frankly terrifying investor-state dispute settlement implications (ISDS is, loosely put – and, on their part, all-too-loosely defined – that corporations are given the right to sue countries which 'limit' their competition) and intellectual property (IP) ramifications for medicine and genetic patenting. The agreement signed does nothing to quell such concerns. While its effects on IP in the book trade are perhaps negligible in comparison to the ISDS provisions, such an agreement would nonetheless have a massive, long-lasting effect in areas like rights management and anti-circumvention for DRM, criminal and civil enforcement, and the question of 'temporary copies' – are ebooks like books you can own or pieces of software that you merely license?

The TPP, though broader in scope, is, in this section, a 'policy-laundering' update of SOPA (the failed / tabled United States' Stop Online Piracy Act and its predecessor PIPA – Protect IP Act), ACTA (the multinational, ongoing Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement; currently negotiated and signed by numerous countries but rejected by the European Parliament in 2012 and unratified, so not yet in force) and the DMCA (the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, the 1998 legislation governing copyright rights / infringement), America's response to the 1996 WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) treaties.[223] Amongst other things, the TPP in its current state suggests expanding copyright terms to the author's life plus 70 years (entrenching copyright for the author's

'successors in interest'), or for corporate creations ('a basis other than the life of a natural person') 70 years after first 'authorised' publication / performance / phonogram (or, if having failed to achieve 'authorised' publication / etc. during 25 years after creation, then copyright will extend 70 years after creation). This would be in keeping with America's Copyright Term Extension Act (CTE; 1998) and, to some extent, the European Union's harmonising Copyright Duration Directive of 1993 (updated / revised 2006). Whether this is an appropriate length of time is debatable; the United States, however, also raised the possibility of rolling back areas of public domain ('where protection is claimed, or that meets or comes subsequently to meet the criteria for protection under this Chapter'; as they did with the CTE[224]). This was not embraced by the other negotiating nations but remains a troubling possibility for the future, especially amongst other provisions forbidding the limitation of free trade.

Imagine an ebook that was not 'authorised' in a particular market for 25 years; thereafter authorising the book for sale – easy with ebooks, the click of a button – could then keep that particular work out of the public domain for another 70 years. Imagine a ban introduced on the parallel importation of ebooks (subject to the discretion of rights holders, according to the TTP); countries / citizens could be subject to price discrimination due to geoblocking: what 'the market will bear' if only because it has no other choice.[225] We have seen the effects of the CTE – nothing published can now enter the American public domain until 2019. Australia's public domain gap, a result of its free trade agreement with the US in 2005, means no new public domain until 2025 at least, including the work of Thomas Mann, A.A. Milne, Bertolt Brecht and Albert Einstein.[226] Works from 1957, that prior to 1978 US copyright law would have entered the US public domain in 2014, will be unavailable until 2053 – books such as *On The Road*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and *The Cat in the Hat*. In Canada ('life-plus-50'), the works of Robert Frost, C.S. Lewis and Aldous Huxley are entering the public domain right now.[227] Which is preferable? Professor Peter Drahos observed in 2003:

> The social costs of this are huge. When a classic copyright work falls out of protection, as did H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* in 1951 in the US, cheaper editions and a wave of innovation follows. Since *The Time Machine* came into the public domain it has continuously been in print and has been the subject of five sequels, five films, two musicals, a ballet, video games and comic books. (Rimmer, 2004)

But the point is not what happens to famous works like these, nor whether the descendants (or corporate inheritors) of J.K. Rowling or Hugh Howey get paid. Rather, the point is this – if countries sign onto the TPP, or to any free trade agreement that resembles it, the bulk of the culture of the 20th century will slide out of their view. We can't imagine it but then we have always had a public domain that remained within living

memory. How many works will become 'orphans'? How many, to paraphrase de Tonnac, *Commedias* will be overlooked? You have to read them to recognise them. You have to be able to legally make copies of them to preserve them. What makes us think that future culture will devote any significant amount of its time to rereading hundred-year-old works?

In short, the danger is that only blockbusters and bestsellers will be remembered – that only they will be allowed to count. It seems absurd... but it is not impossible. We can imagine all we like what might happen to the novel in a future of interconnected readers and writers, sharing and connecting, experimenting and evolving, but it is essential to also calculate what might happen to the novel in a future where it is illegal to share an ebook with a friend, and where the only people who might legally read a popular novel for free in our culture are people born a century after it was written. This is also – I might add – the future without public libraries.

It is fair to argue that the contemporary state of international copyright was not what Victor Hugo intended when he formed the International Literary and Artistic Association in 1878 (and set out to achieve the Berne Convention in 1886, which brought us, variously, to this point); it would be equally fair to retort that Hugo could not have predicted the internet and the power and peril – of publishers and pirates[228] – that would confront authors in terms of copying, circulation and connection. What is clear is that two things Hugo cared very much about – the 'droit d'auteur' (the moral right of authors) and the continued relevance of the public domain – are poorly represented / enforced in contemporary international copyright law.[229]

This brings us to the Google Books ruling of 2013. After eight years of argument and deliberation, Judge Denny Chin (US Second Circuit Court of Appeals) ruled in favour of Google and against the Authors Guild, relying in part on the similar HathiTrust court case in 2012. He began with this background:

> Since 2004, when it announced agreements with several major research libraries to digitally copy books in their collections, defendant Google Inc. ('Google') has scanned more than twenty million books. It has delivered digital copies to participating libraries, created an electronic database of books, and made text available for online searching through the use of 'snippets'. Many of the books scanned by Google, however, were under copyright, and Google did not obtain permission from the copyright holders for these usages of their copyrighted works. As a consequence, in [September] 2005, plaintiffs brought this class action charging Google with copyright infringement. [...] Some 93% of the books are non-fiction while approximately 7% are fiction. Both in-print and out-of-print books are included, although the great majority are out-of-

print. (Chin, *Authors Guild, Inc., et al. v. Google, Inc.*, November 14, 2013; see, for statistical context, Lavoie and Dempsey, 2009)

To many, this seemed a clear-cut case of copyright infringement. Google, however, provided a transformative 'fair use' affirmative defence, an attitude which, oddly enough, may have partly contributed to them being sued; Amazon had been the first to profit from book scanning in this way, starting in 2001 with their 'Look Inside The Book' feature, and Microsoft had also attempted it (2006-2008), as had Baidu (ongoing since 2009), but none of them had tried to make it serve the public domain, even in a half-hearted, roundabout or back-handed way. Google's 'fair use' rationale was validated by Judge Chin, however, when he commented as part of his overall assessment:

> In my view, Google Books provides significant public benefits. It advances the progress of the arts and sciences, while maintaining respectful consideration for the rights of authors and other creative individuals, and without adversely impacting the rights of copyright holders. It has become an invaluable research tool that permits students, teachers, librarians, and others to more efficiently identify and locate books. It has given scholars the ability, for the first time, to conduct full-text searches of tens of millions of books. It preserves books, in particular out-of-print and old books that have been forgotten in the bowels of libraries, and it gives them new life. It facilitates access to books for print-disabled and remote or underserved populations. It generates new audiences and creates new sources of income for authors and publishers. Indeed, all society benefits. (Chin, *Authors Guild, Inc., et al. v. Google, Inc.*, November 14, 2013)[230]

*   *   *

The future is unwritten, or drafted but unpublished. Apple was denied a hearing on their antitrust issues by the United States Supreme Court in March, 2016, and the *Authors Guild v. Google* denied in April, 2016. At this point, it is still unclear how Google will be able to capitalise on its scanned hoard (perhaps by selling 'orphan works'[231]), and the Big Five have gone back to the agency model, although it may not profit them to do so (AE, 2016a). It is also unclear what effects the Trans-Pacific Partnership may actually have should it, or a successive free trade agreement, be eventually ratified. There is a lot that is uncertain and a lot that's at stake. Back in 2014, when the Authors Guild were still trying to overturn Judge Chin's verdict, they advocated on their website for a National Digital Library to oversee the licensing of out-of-print works (essentially the proposed 2008 Google Settlement but excluding Google, plus other financial penalties for Google; see Authors Guild, 2014; Rosenthal et al., *Authors Guild v. Google Appeal Brief*, April, 2014). They didn't seem to be aware that some of their opponents, the libraries that partnered

with Google, had already gone ahead and built an amazing one – the Digital Public Library of America (which does not, to be fair, yet deal with orphan / out-of-print works, only works out of copyright, 7 million items so far) – and have partnered with the European equivalent, Europeana, for the future (Darnton, 2013). The fight for a public domain vs. authors' rights, and what those things should mean, continues unabated.

So much for books, what about novels? It seems probable that digital technology will eventually, like paper and the printing press before it, accompany cultural and market changes which will affect the historical predominance of the novel format / formation. Whether 'enhanced' ebooks will, like paperbacks before them, create a new way of reading, affect literacy and literature in a cultural sense – have the same kind of impact – is more difficult to ascertain. Creative works of variable length and structure will continue to be produced: collected works, like the aforementioned Tolstoy, will surely grow ever-larger and more complete or completist, but shorter, contemporary works, addressing the zeitgeist, the culture, will likewise proliferate. At this point, though, the survival of the popular form of the novel – single author, several hundred pages, mainly corralled in an absurdly small handful of genres – seems gravely uncertain. The role of publishing houses, bookstores and libraries have all been brought into question by the possibilities of digital creation / consumption / circulation; so, too, the figure of the author. The idea that the form and content of the novel could remain relatively static amidst these other changes feels implausible – the question of its value, though, remains urgent and contentious.

THEORETICAL

Sainte Beuve's is not a profound oeuvre. The famous method which in fact, according to […] others, made him the peerless master of nineteenth-century criticism – that method which consists of not separating the man from the work […] – such a method fails to recognize what any more than merely superficial acquaintance with ourselves teaches us: that a book is the product of a self other than that which we display in our habits, in company, in our vices. If we want to try and understand this self, it is deep inside us, by trying to recreate it within us, that we may succeed. This is an effort of the heart from which nothing can absolve us. It is a truth every bit of which we have to create […].

Marcel Proust, *Days of Reading* (John Sturrock, trans., 2008: 110)

[1][232] I felt that it was not necessary for me to incommode myself with the diverse literary theories which had for a time troubled me – notably those that criticism had developed […], which tended to 'make the artist come out of his ivory tower' and, instead of using frivolous or sentimental subjects as his material, to picture great working-class movements or if not the crowd, […] noble intellectuals or heroes. […] Moreover, those who thus theorise, use ready-made expressions which singularly resemble those of the imbeciles they castigate. […] But inversely this quality of language […] with which theorists think they can dispense, those who admire theorists believe to be of no great intellectual value and in order to discern it, require it to be expressed in direct terms because they are unable to infer it from the beauty of imagery. Hence that vulgar temptation of an author to write intellectual works. A great indelicacy. A work in which there are theories is like an object upon which the price is marked.[233]

[2][234] In reality, every reader, as he reads, is the reader of himself. The work of the writer is only a sort of optic instrument which he offers to the reader so that he may discern in the book what he would probably not have seen in himself. The recognition of himself in the book by the reader is the proof of its truth and vice-versa, at least in a certain measure, the difference between the two texts being often less attributable to the author than to the reader. Further, a book may be too learned, too obscure for the simple reader, and thus be only offering him a blurred glass with which he cannot read. But other peculiarities (like inversion) might make it necessary for the reader to read in a certain way in order to read well; the author must not take offence at that but must, on the contrary, leave the reader the greatest liberty and say to him: 'Try whether you see better with this, with that, or with another glass.'[235]

Marcel Proust, *Time Regained* (*Le Temps Retrouvé*, translated posthumously by Proust's friend Sydney Schiff under the pen name of 'Stephen Hudson', 2014: n. pag.)

A theory is exactly like a box of tools. […] It must be useful. It must function. […] We don't revise a theory, but construct new ones; we have no choice but to make others. It is strange that it was Proust, an author thought to be a pure intellectual, who said it so clearly: treat my book as a pair of glasses directed to the outside; if they don't suit you, find another pair; I leave it to you to find your own instrument, which is necessarily an instrument for combat.

Gilles Deleuze in 'Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze', published in Bouchard (ed./trans.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: selected essays and interviews by Michel Foucault* (1980: 208)

In 1908, Marcel Proust began writing a critical response to the corpus of Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve. He also started work on some fictional scenes that he hoped to build into a novel. From these disparate beginnings, Proust wrote and rewrote outlines and versions of both, in ten separate notebooks, and together these impulses became *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*), one of the great novels of the 20th century.

However, much of what ended up in the posthumously-published final volume, *Time Regained* (*Le temps retrouvé*), originated from the period of the Sainte-Beuve texts, including the traces of Proust's rejection of Sainte-Beuve.[236] This split or doubled sense of *Time Regained* here works as a foil, a flexible 'instrument', for a theoretical approach to the future of narrative fiction.

The search for lost time, as Deleuze argues, must take place in the future, not the past, in our ability to make meaning by forging connections. It is "not simply an effort of recall, an exploration of memory: search, 'recherche', is to be taken in the strongest sense of the term, as we say, 'the search for truth'." (2000: 3) Or, otherwise translated – research.

There is an element of deliberate contradiction in this, a role-reversal familiar to this thesis: how can anyone research the future? Like so: while the speculative section's intuitive grasp and the prospective section's schematic outlining have so far provided a stable, if conditional, futuristic outlook – by turns apparitional, projected – the theoretical approach, systematically applied, further allows a 'pre-humous' critical analysis to be performed from a fixed point outside these margins. We do not have to wait on an ending; the future waits for us to go there.

Shortly before his death, Walter Benjamin – among other virtues, an early translator of Proust – wrote a letter to his friend, Theodor Adorno. It ranged across a number of topics: Adorno's essay on the fetish-character in music, Benjamin's work on Baudelaire, memory. He wrote: "The last two pages of your essay struck me as being like a table [...] covered with gifts [...]; the stamp of terminology no more adheres to its ideas than a price tag does to a gift." (Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 633)

This specific negation of Proust's inherent tension (theory / art, price-tag / gift; reversed by terminology / idea) signals the beginning of the end of this thesis: the trajectory of a future for the novel (narrative fiction: literature and literacy) spied in a scattered constellation of ideas – namely, Richard Hoggart and critical literacy, Terry Eagleton and commitment, Fredric Jameson and antinomy, providing three theoretical viewpoints on the future of narrative fiction which comprise my final methodological approach.

CHAPTER SEVEN: 'NEW CONTINUITIES': RICHARD HOGGART AND AN ARGUMENT FOR CRITICAL LITERACY

> It seems, rather, as though a very large number of people are being held down at an appallingly low level in their reading. By now the massive publications provide worse fare than almost any individual reader requires; but that is according to their nature, as mass-publications. [...] To become a mass-art it has to grip and hold down the level of taste, and is doing so with great effectiveness.
>
> **Richard Hoggart, *The Uses Of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments* (1971: 193, 200)**

> *The Uses of Literacy* remains a foundational text – in part because it has been so influential, is still so widely read and referenced and had such a profound impact on personal lives; perhaps also because, finally, the precise meaning of its title remains tantalisingly ambiguous.
>
> **Stuart Hall, *Preface*, in (editors) Michael Bailey and Mary Eagleton's *Richard Hoggart: Culture and Critique* (2011: 7)**

Everything, narratively speaking, has a beginning. In many accounts of the wayward offspring of the English academy that is contemporary cultural studies, one particular author and one specific text is assumed to be foundational.[237] Originally published in 1957, Richard Hoggart's *The Uses Of Literacy* details the effects and ramifications of mass culture on working-class culture in England at the time. In its way it both embraced a Leavisite tradition[238] – close reading, and that certain works have value / meaning – but it also rejected it[239], making claims for popular culture experienced in a period of post-war change.

The book is written in a tone evocative of the cultural studies that Hoggart[240] would go on to inform.[241] It is a melange, a concoction of the customs, relationships and institutions of 'ordinary' people: the first hundred pages[242] are effective portraits of aspects of working-class life, while the provocative third chapter, *'Them' and 'Us'*, prefigures decades-long debates over the significance of communities, cultures, subcultures, the construction of subjectivity and 'our' relationship to the 'other'. To this end it brokered a particular approach to theorising culture, as well as participating in it and bearing witness to it, and the illustration of all of this through contemporary texts and textual analysis.[243]

Ultimately, however, Hoggart failed in the book to be open to new cultural practices in precisely the same way that he had recognised and attempted to rectify a prior lack of critical engagement with working-class traditions.[244] This is most commonly and obviously determined in his chapter 'The Newer Mass Art: Sex In Shiny Packets', where he decried the social practices and their artefacts that he (passing by, standing outside) fundamentally did not understand and could not ascribe value to: 'the juke-box boys',

'the 'spicy' magazines', 'sex-and-violence novels'[245]. In short, Hoggart mistook socially productive / generative movements, e.g. genre fiction or popular music, for their 'mass', commercially-produced aspects (as debased, simplistic, generic[246]) and was blind to their value as historical products – and producers – of, among other things, divergent literacies.[247]

Given Hoggart's passionate defence of literature[248], his reading is distressingly ahistorical[249] in that similar arguments about the weakness of other genres or technological media to valuably and authentically produce and circulate meaning are also easily found in accounts of 'the early novel' (recall Anna Seward's 'reigning folly' in the first section of this thesis) and obstinately persist in our culture. Recognising this paradoxical flaw, many critics of Hoggart and of the book move on (even in my own careful choice of words – 'assume, evoke, inform, prefigure, approach' – there is an admitted resistance to unreflexively embracing Hoggart's political project, namely that culture, 'the good kind', will fix what's wrong with the world). Nonetheless, in Hoggart's '*The Uses*', and what came after it, there is a seed of an idea, a theory, central to the conclusions of this thesis: call it, critical literacy.

*   *   *

This chapter is about the history of Hoggart's version of that theory, how it was assumed, taken for granted, and to some extent thus overlooked as an ongoing project of cultural studies. Two dissenting reviews of Hoggart and *The Uses of Literacy* can help set the tone and help give context to an ongoing argument.[250] Raymond Williams wrote the first,[251] a gently rebuking, contemporary appraisal of Hoggart's book in *Universities & Left Review*[252]: "We should be grateful to Richard Hoggart [...] for giving us the opportunity to look again at this general question in our own immediate terms," (Williams, 1957: 29) he begins, and quickly goes on to argue against the connections Hoggart presumes between 'working-class culture' and 'mass culture', Hoggart's identification-location of 'working-class speech', his critical characterisation of 'working-class politics', and so on (in fact, every single time he mentions Hoggart, even to praise him fulsomely, he ends up critiquing him). Taking on the theoretical distinctions[253], Williams offers particular counsel on the 'uses of literacy' and its literatures[254]:

> The processes of historical change, and of a selective cultural tradition, ensure that the cultural mainstream is always general in character, if not in distribution, and this is the point to remember. To set up, against this, an artificial 'working-class culture' is harmful in every way. [...] Art that can be defined in advance is unlikely to be worth having. The attempt at such definition springs from a conception of history and culture as matters divisible

into simple and rigid periods, determined by mechanical inter-relations, rather than as processes of continual change and response. (ibid: 29-30)

Williams' insight, while general in character, to use his phrase, is still keen, particularly in regard to answering Hoggart: cultural tradition is complex and selective (filtering, as de Tonnac called it, 'what remains after everything else has been forgotten') and a question of shifting usage as much as of survival. For Williams, Hoggart's reading is ultimately based on a faulty premise:

The working-class, by its very exposure in [capitalist…] society, was of course destined for a consumer's role. […] In practice, these media have penetrated all classes: the reading and entertainments of the ordinary bourgeoisie (as distinct from its professional section) are indistinguishable, generally, from ordinary working-class reading and entertainments. To equate commercial culture with working-class culture is, then, wrong on both counts. […We] must not be prevented from seeing the problems as they are by making a section of the consumers of such material responsible, directly or indirectly, for the production of the whole. (ibid: 30) [255]

He concludes this line of argument:

[A] culture, a whole way of life, is never reducible to its artefacts. A way of life is a use of resources for particular human purposes. In the case of ordinary personal property these purposes overlap and even become identical, despite differences of class. But, in the wider field, purposes in the use of resources can differ significantly and vitally. Here in fact is the present distinction between […] classes […] quite distinctly committed to different and alternative versions of the nature and purposes of society, and consequently to different versions of human relationship. This remains the most important cultural distinction of our time[, that we are either competitive or collective]. (ibid: 31)

Here the 'uses of literacy' are re-characterised from an appreciation or critique of what literacy is used for, to an appreciation or critique of how and why differing uses exist, of how and why they are valued, and of suggesting how and why – ultimately – literacies can be useful, beyond simply the literal, 'mechanical' studies of how and why they are commonly used. In this we can see reflected, via Williams, both the sincerity of Hoggart's attempt and its definitive failure.

This 'staking a claim' political project of cultural studies is also at the heart of a recent review by K.K. Ruthven called 'Forgetting Richard Hoggart', responding to the publication of *Understanding Richard Hoggart: A Pedagogy of Hope* (Bailey, et al., 2011):

Why should people working in twenty-first century cultural studies feel obliged to Understand Richard Hoggart? Principally, I suppose, because he institutionalised the umbrella term they still operate under […]. Universal gratitude for that initiative, however, is moderated by misgivings about what he personally contributed to the institutional space he'd created, in which other scholars began doing very different kinds of interdisciplinary work from his own. […] The complexity of what goes on globally nowadays under the banner of cultural studies makes it impossible to specify a common origin for that loose federation of varyingly commensurate practices which constitute this ever-expanding and anti-disciplinary discipline. (Ruthven, 2013: 307-308)[256]

That Hoggart and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies are now conveniently (over)mythologised is hardly controversial. Conversely, however, knowing that the practical purposes we could invoke them for are acts of retrospective legitimation should not preclude the fact that we can still do so quite legitimately – seriously, intentionally, usefully. Ruthven, for his part, goes on to locate a specific problem with 'using' Hoggart:

Two equally unanticipated developments revealed the limitations of his print-centred notion of culture. One was the turn to continental and especially French critical theory, which marginalised his own grounding of cultural critique in the close reading of literary texts […]. The other development was the publication in 1962 of Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, which predicted the demise of 'typographic man' in a then emergent and now global electronic age. Its multimedia forms have created more urgent agendas for cultural analysts than Hoggart's grand plan for giving labouring-class people what he considered to be their birthright: namely, the opportunity to enrich their lives by reading literary classics, which allegedly warehouse what Matthew Arnold called 'the best that is known and thought in the world' [(*Essays in Criticism*, 1865)]. That experience, Hoggart believed, would give everybody the necessary touchstones for assessing popular culture. (ibid: 310)

On evidence, Hoggart was hardly bothered by McLuhan[257]; the 'turn to theory' in the history of the Centre, however, has been well documented. Stuart Hall in *Culture, Media, Language* (1980) writes of a second break – complex Marxism (first the Frankfurt School, its precursors and contemporaries, then Louis Althusser, amongst others) and theoreticism – that affected the Centre and the nascent field of cultural studies following on from Hoggart's initial break with literary (English) studies, and how this continued as a problematic, the theoretical vs. 'concrete studies'[258]:

In the highly charged sectarian atmosphere which has sometimes disfigured these debates critical distinctions were frequently lost: for example, on one side the distinction between the 'empirical' moment in an analysis and 'Empiricism': on the other side that between the 'theoretical' and 'Theoreticism'. These have turned out to be mirror-images of one another. But it has not always proved easy to get beyond them. [...] The slogan is most frequently invoked by one side to stop the other from doing something – 'thinking' or 'doing'. It reflects the fatal empiricism / theoreticism split and, behind that, the social division of labour. The error arises from assuming that, some time long ago – in the 'age of innocence', perhaps – theory and practice were inextricably united, and it is the 'bad faith' of one side or the other which wilfully divides them. The fact is that in the present social division of labour they are remorselessly divided and separated, so that their 'unity' can only be produced as a result: it is the result of an effective articulation, about which there can be no prior guarantees.[259] (Hall, et al., 1980a: 280)

Ruthven cites (2013: 312) a line from *Understanding Richard Hoggart* to demonstrate Hoggart's eventual distance from the CCCS and presage his 'dwindling relevance' to contemporary cultural studies: "'[The] current Follies at the Centre you founded', [E.P.] Thompson commiserated [in a letter from November, 1977], 'must make you want to throw up'." (Bailey, et al., 2011: 101, see also 127) Neither Ruthven nor the *Understanding* authors are particularly clear as to what they think Thompson specifically meant. In *Understanding* it is just an aside in a section on Thompson's long relationship with Hoggart; for Ruthven just a sign of Hoggart's 'post-relationship' / 'break-up' with the Centre.

For what it's worth, it seems too late to be a reference to Hall's (et al.) *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (1976), which reworks many of Hoggart's aforementioned negative preoccupations in *The Uses of Literacy* into cultural prerogatives.[260] Likewise, it is probably too early for Thompson to be sensitive (if he indeed was) to the effects of feminism on the Centre's politics[261] that would eventually, productively, challenge Hall. Perhaps it was only a general sense of such things, but it's worth considering the more immediate context. The 'turn to theory' that Thompson objected most strenuously to at the time was Althusserian Marxism – against which he wrote *The Poverty of Theory* (1978), a sharply-honed-skewering of Althusser and 'the uses of Althusser' in defence of 'historical materialism' and against 'the elitist division between theory and practice'.[262] This is what Hall and the Centre were working through in the years 1972-1979, leading up to 'Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems' (Hall, et al., 1980a: particularly 13-17) and Hall outlines it even more clearly in 'Cultural Studies: two paradigms' (Hall, 1980b).[263] There is no doubt that Thompson

considered the adoption of Althusser to be serious folly (or 'Follies', whichever[264]) and that Hall et al. were similarly aware of Thompson's position (Hall, et al., 1980a: 13-17, 274, 276).

This does not prove anything about the meaning of Thompson's letter, specifically (reading it, as it were, 'to the letter' – literally); but it does underline the instability of Ruthven's reading of Hoggart alongside the problematic of theory.[265] Hoggart demonstrably valued theory in his own assessments of popular culture and the other members of the Centre, at no point uncritically, generally fought to maintain that tradition of theory related to practice. To infer, then, that Hoggart's failure to embrace certain theories, or certain *kinds* of theories (circulating at a particular historical moment), disqualifies him from further theoretical employment, seems odd (and the image of him being 'left behind by theory'[266] asserts a mythological progress which is, considering Hall and subsequent history, even more bizarre). In any case, it was not so much a matter of Hoggart's marginalisation – 'close reading' was becoming just one tool among many and literature (traditionally defined) just one kind of text. The idea that Hoggart found more in and got more out of literature than other kinds of texts is inarguable; the idea that he avoided reading other texts (i.e. culture) productively because of the paucity of his 'English Lit.' tools is somewhat missing the point[267]; and if his priorities and his practices seem old-fashioned now, it hardly requires any debate as to why. Ruthven writes:

> Hoggart's judgemental remarks on juke-box boys reveal not only how ill-equipped he was at this stage to analyse dispassionately cultural developments he disapproved of but also the hazards of basing value judgments on lived experience. (Ruthven, 2013: 310)

One wonders why we must be dispassionate about things we disapprove of – surely it is claims to unreflexive objectivity we should challenge? Happily, making value judgements based on lived experience – say, gender and feminism, race and postcolonialism, sexuality[268], or subjective autobiography[269] – while indeed hazardous and often prone to conflict, can be helpfully challenging to totalities ('us and them'), to ideological investments, to disconnections of theory and practice. Ruthven claims (correctly, by the terms of mythological progress) that Hoggart's 'lived experience' proved inadequate to deal with difference (strange theories, others' experiences) – and that may be as true of his work, broadly speaking, as of anyone else's over time; of Hoggart, the person, and his actual 'lived experience', there is little reason to believe that, though. Ruthven concludes:

> The humanities could rediscover the mission they lost while whoring after strange theorists, we're asked to believe, by reviving a Hoggartian humanism

whose dominant values are 'right judgement', 'moral authority', 'plain speech', 'fair-mindeness', 'civility', 'common decency', and 'compassion'. […] Armed with these values we could 'intervene' productively 'in current debates on […] class and culture, education and the arts'. […] In the transnationally corporatised world that houses 'the university in ruins' I can't imagine a more hopeless use of Hoggart's wide-ranging writings. (ibid.: 312)

And here Ruthven is right, overall – he is right to be sceptical and challenge 'the uses of Hoggart', especially if that simply means those conservative values listed, just as Williams was right to chide Hoggart's critical conception of the working class as 'bad' consumers (as a class that enacts certain traditions, claims certain artefacts[270]). Just a few years ago, Hall said of Hoggart (Bailey and Eagleton (eds.), 2011: 7): "It was his method and its underpinning values, not the content of the answer, which left its impact." Contrarily, I think the content of at least one of his answers can provide us with a more hopeful use: critical literacy.

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In a lecture delivered to the Book Trust Seminar at the British Library in 1998, Hoggart spoke of the problem of illiteracy in the UK (and more broadly), a question that had troubled him for decades[271], brought into focus by long years of teaching in adult education and his work for UNESCO.[272] For him it was a general problem that did not, however, exist outside of specific causes or that could not be confronted by specific solutions (though not necessarily 'one approach suits all'). He noted:

The need is, above all, for critical literacy, a literacy which is critically aware, not easily taken in, able to 'read' tricks of tone, selectivities, false ad hominem cries and all the rest. […] From all this we should adopt the slogan: 'Literacy is not enough'. The level of literacy we accept for most of the population, of literacy unrelated to the way language is misused in this kind of society, ensures that literacy becomes simply a way of further subordinating great numbers of people. […] The second slogan has therefore to be: 'Critical literacy for all'. Critical literacy means combining, with training in literacy, teaching about the difficulties, challenges and benefits of living in an open society which aims to be a democracy. […] The next step must be from critical literacy to a condition even more difficult. Words which don't sound pompous are difficult to find here, but perhaps cultivated literacy will serve. It means arriving at the ability to read other than functionally, which is after all only a simple matter. It means being more than critical in our reactions to what we see, hear and read, but being open, intellectually and imaginatively

responsive. Creative reading, it might also be called. (Hoggart, 2001: 195-197)[273]

Now there are obvious critiques of this: that it is patronising (disconnected from the ground-up practices of teachers and educators), overly general (insufficiently programmatic), untheoretical (sloganeering), and generated from a love of 'traditional' literature, and values and methods, spanning back to his earliest works – the same old Hoggart, in other words. What must be considered is that this particular theorisation has in fact fallen too far out of favour (in the historical and theoretical distance from those values, methods, and, it must be said, what has been remembered of Hoggart's work). Critical literacy, if thought of at all, is generally, and perhaps wrongly, assumed to be a ground state, a jumping-off point for theory – but we rarely hear arguments about 'critical literacy for all' (as if, as I said, it was somehow patronising to people, like suggesting that people should eat healthier food or get more sleep). In an age of information overload and knowledge meltdown, Hoggart's exhortation cannot afford to be neglected.

The first step in attempting a critical literacy is to admit the possibility of literacies – not the relativist monstrosity Hoggart scorned, where all culture is equal (or can be valued equally) – but that there are multiplicities / multimodalities / different experiences of expression that do not need to be hierarchised but do still need to be addressed. This requires a variety of responses: mindfulness of the theoretical gap between languages (not everything translates, hence multiple literacies already), attentiveness to the more complicated, concrete problems of globalisation (multilingual cultures circulating and resettling – diasporically, as travellers, immigrants and refugees, and textually, via the internet) and yet unflagging commitment to combatting the ongoing global illiteracy crisis, of which functionality is still only a first step. While Hoggart might not have approved of literacies that prioritise oral, visual, physical and aural practices, even if conceived as textual, he could not have denied their newly lived experience in 'the machinery of change' (as per McLuhan), the internet; and he would have been among the first I would think, alongside Paulo Freire,[274] to argue that having 'only so much education to work the machines and no more' is historically insufficient, in fact disastrous for the class that works them.[275] As we know from Hoggart's 'lived experience', adult education, continuing education, combatting illiteracy wherever it is found – these are programmatic steps towards critical literacy; corporate control of, and governmental indifference to (and vice-versa), the censorship of communal aspects and areas of the internet (and of human cultures generally) – these are potential barriers to critical literacy. Now, Hoggart *might* still prefer a prioritisation of language-based traditional literacy as the premier tool for connecting and communicating culture but, I would argue, he would not ignore or deny the real, deliberate practices of how the internet is used – as consumers, citizens or

collectives. And whether he would or wouldn't, we must not.[276] It is a project for the future.

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There is a postscript to Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory*, one worth remembering here: "It is easy to be respectful [...] if one's theory can never do so much as bend a pin in the real political world [...]." (Thompson, 1995: 292-293)[277] That is, in short, Thompson was annoyed with the CCCS 'on the side of theory'[278]:

> I have explained, and I hope with some care, in *The Poverty of Theory*, why I reject this [...particular expression] of 'theory' [...which] in explaining everything, in one complex gulp, [...] leaves the actual history unexplained. This is not, of course, a question of whether we need theory or not. Do I need to say that the title of my book did not invoke the jettisoning of all theory, any more than Marx, in writing *The Poverty of Philosophy*, intended to jettison all philosophy. My critique was of Theory, of the notion that it could all, somehow, be put together, as a system, by theoretical means. In every moment of our work we certainly need theory – whether in defining problems of the mode of production, or micro-economics, or the family, or culture or the state – and we need research which is both empirically and theoretically informed, and the theorised interrogation of what this research finds. (ibid.: 299-300)

The second step for 'critical literacies' is overcoming the seemingly impossible hurdles of (i) convincing people of the necessity of such a literacy – and challenging institutions at all educational stages to provide it – and (ii) going about empirically testing and proving how it can work. At this point, the obvious problems of implementing such a program make it seem about as plausible as reviving stoicism or scepticism as secondary-school subjects. Nonetheless, since critical literacy is actually a thing which can be taught, and in some sense is already taught in any education that provides a critical (and self-critical) approach to its subject matter, we should more deliberately pursue it. Raymond Williams in 'The Future of Cultural Studies' argued:

> This is where I come to the question of the future. [...] If you take the question of popular culture, or popular fiction, it has been clearly quite transformed in the 1980s from its situation in the 1950s [...] because people have been more prepared, because of general social and formational changes, to relate directly to popular culture, putting themselves at a very conscious distance from Richards and Leavis in the 1920's and 1930's who saw it only as a menace to literacy – an element which survives, perhaps, although always as

uncertainly and ambiguously as ever, in Richard Hoggart's book. (Williams, 1989: 159)

Both Hall and Williams were wrong, then, in terms of which element they chose to put their finger on. The point is not that Hoggart's book or its title or his thoughts on the matter were ambiguous (conflicted / contradictory), Hoggart's point was and the point still is that literacies have important uses, and that broader interpretations and critical understandings and practices of both literacies and their uses is valuable, and, arguably, more – of pronounced necessity. Not that they would have contested that or thought it any great claim, I assume, but it is a project perhaps too taken for granted by contemporary cultural studies. Williams concludes:

> If this is thought through now, if we fight for it, even if we fail we shall have done something to justify ourselves before the future. But I don't think we need fail at all; I think that the results will be uneven and scattered, but this is where the challenge now is. If you accept my definition that this is really what Cultural Studies has been about, of taking the best we can in intellectual work and going with it in this very open way to confront people for whom it is not a way of life, for whom it is not in any probability a job, but for whom it is a matter of their own intellectual interest, their own understanding of the pressures on them, pressures of every kind, from the most personal to the most broadly political – if we are prepared to take that kind of work and to revise the syllabus and discipline as best we can, on this site which allows that kind of interchange, then Cultural Studies has a very remarkable future indeed. (ibid: 162)

In other words, echoing Arnold, reverberating through Hoggart ('the best we can in intellectual work'): critical literacy. I am by no means proposing any grand rehabilitation of Hoggart[279] per se, but we can surely assert this specific theory of critical literacy, central to his work, if not exclusive to him, defined as a name to a problem that has not yet been solved. In doing so we need not lay claim to the contemporary ground already fought for and held by activists and educators (and philosophers and politicians – and, specifically, UNESCO) on the problems of illiteracies. To support them, though, we could perhaps start by retrieving and trying to honour what the past promised of future change.

Mariette Clare, for example, from the education working group of the CCCS, wrote an excellent paper called 'The Adult Literacy Campaign: Politics and practices' about the theorisation of her concrete experiences working for the Adult Literacy Service in Leicestershire in the late '70s. Its continued relevance demonstrates how little has changed, both in 'literate' societies:

The construction of the social democratic citizenry 'us', to include those of 'us' who just 'happen' to be unable to read and write is peculiarly plain here. The problem is presented as being located entirely in personal learning difficulties. The emphasis on the individuality of and differences between students, articulated against the notion that we are all members of the same community, serves once again to conceal relations of unequal power. This pretence of equality where it does not exist makes the task of achieving it not only more difficult but often simply unrecognised. (Gray et al. (eds.), 2007: 1025)[280]

...and also globally:

Such analyses were undoubtedly available in 1973, not only through the radical critics of the earlier educational consensus, already cited, but also from such third world theorists as Nyere and Freire. They represent a principled break from the 1965 UNESCO stance which attempted to justify literacy solely through an economic vindication of its role in so-called 'development programmes'. (ibid.: 1018)

As we saw in the previous section, this is still the same battle being fought within UNESCO and the OECD, and internationally. The principled break Clare is referring to was UNESCO's *Declaration of Persepolis* in September, 1975. As it is, however, an event typically only quoted in summary and truncated in meaning, we should start there. Here is what is commonly remembered of it: 'Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right.'[281] Here's how it goes on:

It is true that all social structures give rise to the type of education which can maintain and reproduce them, and that the purposes of education are subordinated to the purposes of the dominant groups; but it would be incorrect to conclude that there is nothing to be done within the existing system. Literacy, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation but it is an essential instrument for all social change. Literacy work, like education in general is a political act. [...] It is not neutral, for the act of revealing social reality in order to transform it, or of concealing it in order to preserve it, is political. (Hummel, 1977: 70)[282]

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In the end, the uses of literacy are perhaps not so ambiguous, however we interpret or utilise – or not – Hoggart's work. Certainly, a Freirean tradition has also survived and been more forcefully applied in critical pedagogies, and as such we shouldn't necessarily

fetishise Hoggart's mostly unappreciated attempts to raise consciousness. However, there is something telling in the fact that such a problematic found its footing in relation to the widespread and more obviously destructive literacy crises in the 'developing world' but was deemed immaterial, overlooked, in more privileged countries. To counter culturally myopic concerns over 'the death of the novel' and imagine a future for narrative fiction, one obvious and under-employed use of Hoggartian critical literacy would therefore be that we engage with the genuinely global challenge of 'literacy is not enough' and a 'critical literacy for all', practice 'creative reading' by any appellation, and, in Hoggart's wake, be intellectually and imaginatively responsive to more inclusive definitions and more nuanced experiences of literacy. Make that his legacy.

CHAPTER EIGHT: 'OVERDUE BOOKS ON BORROWED TIME': TERRY EAGLETON AND AN ARGUMENT FOR COMMITMENT

'The movement away from theory and generality,' remarks Annandine in Iris Murdoch's novel *Under the Net*, 'is the movement towards truth. All theorising is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular.' It is a case that one can find reproduced a thousand times in the annals of modern literary commentary. […] Theory is one thing, while art or life is another. One scarcely needs to point out that Annandine's statement is a theoretical claim in itself. […] It would also be interesting to know how any human situation could be unutterably particular and still prove intelligible.

Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature* (2012: 14)

(IX) A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. […]

(XVI) A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the 'eternal' image of the past [whereas] historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called 'Once upon a time' in historicism's bordello.

Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), published in Hannah Arendt (ed.) and Harry Zohn (trans.) *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (2007: 257-258, 262)[283]

In this thesis I have at times referred to the historicising notion that certain social developments in concert with specific technological innovations have produced particular practices of writing and reading, such as the 'novel formation', serialised and short fiction (from Dickens to 'keitai shōsetsu', m-novels and online short story communities), and historical formats such as the 'airplane novel' (and 'railway novel' and so on), the paperback and genre fiction (romance, fantasy, science fiction).[284] What is missing from that conception is the no-less-ideological counterpoint that of course we make choices: we choose what and how to write, what and how to read, and there is nothing inevitable about it. While we can register the productive social pressures that appear in our cultures, their moments of commitment and of contradiction, we could just as easily identify counterexamples of creative resistance to such trends – writers and readers responding in their own way, against the grain.

The theorisation of this distinction, however, points away from traditional aesthetic claims for autonomous art and works of creative genius, and away from deterministic technologisation, but is also in contrast to the equivocal marriage of the two positions.[285]

A non-dogmatic materialist view of literature might likewise tolerate a certain amount of idealism or essentialism in the mix; however, the availability of other critiques suggests, perhaps, that we will not need to.

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In 2012, Terry Eagleton published *The Event Of Literature*, a sprawling and erudite survey of literary theory, and in many ways a rejoinder and reconstitution of his own writing in *After Theory* (2003), *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991), *The Ideology Of The Aesthetic* (1990), *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) and *Criticism And Ideology* (1976)[286]. In it Eagleton, like Richard Hoggart, makes claims for a 'moral to the story'[287] but, in his case, one exercised by an education in Catholicism and ('capital-M') Marxism, as opposed to the working-class-made-educated, muddy socialism of Hoggart (Tredell, 1994: 330). The term 'righteous' might be more apt than 'moral', being even more theistically and politically amplified and yet, in a way, turning us from a definition of morality that frowns on what people get up to in the bedroom and returning it to a sense somewhere between 'values' and an actual 'right and wrong' (however uncomfortable this may be to those of a relativistic, liberal-democratic mindset).

This, too, is the sense in which Hoggart means it (as in, righteous indignation) but because it is often, in his work, connected to 'reading more classics' it is sadly misinterpreted as being conservative, old-fashioned and out-of-date. Examining Eagleton, therefore, is a good way of clarifying what is obscured in Hoggart,[288] namely that "[political] argument is not an alternative to moral preoccupations: it is those preoccupations taken seriously in their full implications. […] The idea that there are 'non-political' forms of criticism is simply a myth which furthers certain political uses of literature all the more effectively." (Eagleton, 2008: 181-182)[289] Morality and mythology are in fact long-standing areas of inquiry for Eagleton, but it is another of his theoretical instruments – strategy – which is even more pertinent to political argument and which can perhaps, in one form or another, 'cover all bases', material or otherwise (the making of art, conceiving of experiences as aesthetic, the 'uses' of art), although it must first be approached in its own complex context.

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The Event of Literature demonstrates a passionate and aggressive intellect, opening with a marvellous chapter on medieval scholasticism and 'whether things have general natures'; throughout the book, Eagleton is wide-ranging in his understanding and command of diverse literary theories on 'what is literature?' and 'the nature of fiction'[290], spinning and wheeling in full flight. In the last chapter, 'Strategies', alone, he covers *Paradise Lost* and *Jane Eyre*, American New Criticism, Russian Formalism, reception

theory, philosophical, phenomenological, hermeneutic, semiotic, structuralist, poststructuralist, modernist, postmodernist, psychoanalytic and political theory. This is not a complaint, however. To borrow from Deleuze and from Proust, sometimes the glass which helps us to see better is the kaleidoscope, with its contrasting insights – it complicates, though not necessarily confuses, the matter at hand.

One example would be when Eagleton puts Stanley Fish, who he calls an 'inverted essentialist' (Eagleton, 2012: 19) and 'anti-realist' (ibid.: 45), on the same page as Ferdinand de Saussure and Althusser (ibid.: literally, 44-45) and postmodern theory. Even by way of mild comparison and contradistinction (Fish's epistemological radicalism (ibid.: 43) / neo-pragmatism (ibid.: 41) vs. the epistemological constructivism of structuralist vs. poststructuralist thought; ibid.: broadly, 39-46), this is presumably infuriating to devotees of Fishian theory (should that be the right term), although perhaps not as much as the fact that he effectively ignores Fish's work after 1980[291] (that he does the same thing to Umberto Eco and Tony Bennett[292] is hardly mollifying):

> Does Fish really mean that blank verse, heroic couplets or the character of Miranda are not properties internal to a text but features bestowed on it by the reader? One might defend the case by claiming in Nietzschean fashion that there are no such things as inherent qualities in any case […]. But this then makes Fish's point about literary works trivial and self-evident. If it is true of the whole of reality, it cancels all the way through and leaves everything exactly as it was. It has meaning but no force. The claim that literary works lack inherent qualities is informative only if one believes that such things exist in the first place. […] In fact, Fish appreciates the point that his case cancels all the way through, and is actually rather pleased about it. He is that odd kind of pragmatist who has no wish for his theories to make a practical difference to the world. They simply redescribe what we do in any case. The point is to interpret the world, not to change it. (ibid.: 45)[293]

This very real distaste for Fish nonetheless reflects a revelatory facet of *The Event of Literature*, which is that Eagleton is primarily arguing with himself – and would prefer that his arguments not be mistaken for, or miscategorised with, anyone else's:

> Almost thirty years ago, in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, I argued a strongly anti-essentialist case about the nature of literature. Literature, I insisted, has no essence whatsoever. Those pieces of writing dubbed 'literary' have no single property or even set of properties in common. Though I would still defend this view, I am clearer now than I was then that nominalism is not the only alternative to essentialism. It does not follow from the fact that literature has no essence that the category has no legitimacy at all. (ibid.: 19)[294]

Fish's position provides no purchase for strategic intervention, whereas Eagleton in *The Event of Literature* remains committed to making a difference in the world, hence his perseverance in accounting for his own past. In the multiplicity of approaches he considers in *'The Event'*, however, some articulations thus stand out, as being part of and particular to that account.

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For the purposes of reducing Eagleton's many arguments to a single concept of 'strategy', there are two key elements which also need to be addressed. One is the limits – the problematic – of imagination. Eagleton argues:

> There is a lineage from Shelley and George Eliot to Henry James and Iris Murdoch for which morality itself is a question of imagination, and thus an inherently aesthetic faculty. It is by this divinatory power that we can feel our way empathetically into the inner lives of others, decentring the ego in order to grasp the world selflessly from their standpoint. The classical realist novel is thus a moral practice in its very structure, shifting as it does from one centre of consciousness to another to constitute a complex whole. Literature can therefore be seen as a moral project even before it has come to utter a moral sentiment. (ibid.: 60)

But Eagleton rejects this lineage. To him, imagination is no barrier to humanity's destructive capacity and its history as an 'emotional prosthesis', as raised by Hoggart with the development of public libraries and mass literacy, one co-opted for 'political stability'. He concludes: "When it comes to what we call literature […] there can be no simple translation of lived experience into laws and norms. […] There are possibilities [, however,] beyond being struck dumb by the work's ineffable particularity on the one hand, and reducing it to a set of moral tags on the other." (ibid.: 64) I differ with Eagleton, for what it is worth, on the question of the value of the imagination. For Eagleton, the fact that it could go either way ('the uses and abuses of imagination'), or make no headway at all, outweighs any individual experience of it. From my perspective, I am not arguing for any specific lesson learned from fiction, only for the cumulative value of encounters and experiences substantially different from one's own – which is no different in fiction than in any other aspect of life. What fiction offers (with no guarantee) is something that Eagleton and I do therefore agree on, the second key element:

> So-called literary works, then, entail a double-reading, as we respond to concrete situations yet inscribe them, if only unconsciously, in some less specific context. […] To treat something as fictional is among other things to allow yourself to think and feel around it, imaginatively freewheel, refuse the

grim fatality of the factual in the name of the virtual. […] Literary works have the power to present things in their tangible presence, and thus to draw the reader in; but […] they can also free them up to be viewed from a number of different angles, thus combining the palpable with the provisional. In this interplay of distancing and drawing in, they reproduce in unusually intensive form the doubled or ironic consciousness which is a characteristically human way of belonging to the world. (ibid.: 86-87)

As Eagleton moves on without explaining this last comment, it is useful to add an interpretation – to be human is to be ourselves primarily in relation to others; our specificity is grounded and guaranteed from without. This, too, can go either way. When he discusses it in 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', it is with wry resignation:[295] "All oppositional politics thus move under the sign of irony, knowing themselves ineluctably parasitic on their antagonists." (Eagleton et al., 1990: 26[296]); however, experienced as a culture rather than as an individual, it can produce (in his words) utopian strategies for a feasible future:

A desirable but unfeasible future, one that fails to found itself in the present in order to bridge us beyond it, is in this sense the reverse of the future offered us by some brands of social determinism, which is inevitable but not thereby necessarily desirable. […] A utopian thought that does not risk simply making us ill [from neurotic longing] is one able to trace within the present that secret lack of identity with itself which is the spot where a feasible future might germinate – the place where the future overshadows and hollows out the present's spurious repleteness. To 'know the future' can only mean to grasp the present under the sign of its internal contradictions, in the alienations of its desire, in its persistent inability ever quite to coincide with itself. (ibid.: 25-26)

These two elements – the limits of the imagination and the perception of our doubled consciousness (identity / lack of identity) – are like inverted mirrors of each other. It is not, to agree with Eagleton, that reading novels makes you empathetic. Yet it is, to also agree with Eagleton, that the act of reading fiction is at the same time an inscription in the actual world (of the mind, anyway) – an overlapping of contexts, an incitement of possibilities. These elements further reflect the opposition of novel realism as a moral project (all fiction, actually, in its interplay of identification and estrangement) – one that 'imagines' people in relation to each other – with forms of philosophical realism that work as an alternative to the non-choice of nominalism or essentialism (bridging between material particulars and idealist universals), tethering people to their reality.

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This theory of strategy in its simplest form crudely describes how everyone experiences everything in their lives – that is, by learning 'strategically', thinking from within, grounded from without – while destabilising any particular mythology we might attach to our own specific experience (our ideology[297]). It is a theory entirely suited to near-constant alteration and yet usefully describes a universal experience of being human where none should be possible.[298] Any extension of it, though, proves unconvincingly rhetorical, which is why a more complex theorisation of strategy is still necessary. To return to the final chapter of *The Event of Literature*, Eagleton connects and combines literary theories to produce what he calls, citing Jameson, 'strategies'[299]; his clearest definition of what he means by that, however, goes back to *Literary Theory* (1983):

> I argued earlier that any attempt to define the study of literature in terms of either its method or its object is bound to fail. But we have now begun to discuss another way of conceiving what distinguishes one kind of discourse from another, which is neither ontological or methodological but strategic. This means asking first not what the object is or how we should approach it, but why we should want to engage with it in the first place. […][300] No theory or method, in any case, will have merely one strategic use. They can be mobilized in a variety of different strategies for a variety of ends. But not all methods will be equally amenable to particular ends. It is a matter of finding out, not of assuming from the start that a single method or theory will do. (2008: 183-184)

In short, Eagleton does not really have a 'theory of strategy', simply a category called 'theories of strategy' and a method for approaching them. To me, as they can all be redacted to this 'strategic distinction', they could in effect be argued as one theory, regardless of the different answers they provoke. Nevertheless, Eagleton in *The Event of Literature* does in fact preference a particular strategy (which he attributes to Jameson) and proceeds to measure the others against it:

> Perhaps it is not until the emergence of the novel, aided by the arrival of mass printing technology, that the idea of the literary work as an object rather than a practice takes such firm root in the critical mind.[301] Jameson himself can be found drawing fruitfully on these staple [Kenneth] Burkeian notions [('strategic responses to determinate situations')] as early as *The Political Unconscious*, where he favours a mode of interpretation in which, in a double gesture, one rewrites the literary text in such a way as to reveal it as itself a rewriting of a prior historical or ideological subtext. […] If this is such a resourceful model, it is largely because of the complex view it involves of the relations between text and ideology, or text and history. These things are […] to be grasped […] as alternative facets of a single symbolic practice.[302] The

work itself is to be seen not as a reflection of a history external to it, but as a strategic labour – as a way of setting to work on a reality which, in order to be accessible to it, must somehow be contained within it, and which consequently baffles any simple-minded dichotomy of inside and outside. (2012: 169-170)

Eagleton eventually backs away from the kind of claim that he might have led with in the past – that strategies solve or resolve everything.[303] This is obvious in so much as he has just exhaustively proved that no one theory covers all eventualities, all specifics – that within family resemblances there are still some adopted siblings. And yet I cannot help but wonder if in some less obvious way this theory of strategy, whether it comes from Eagleton or Jameson or Burke, is all that is yet needed to theorise the future of narrative fiction, understand it, that is, from a certain point of view.

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To illustrate this, let me tell you a story, one with an unhappy ending (or, at least, without the satisfaction of narrative closure). It is in this version less about the events which occurred and more about questioning, again, the meaning of them – reflecting on differences between close readings (put simply, that if you examine a text closely, discernible meanings can be found), materialist readings (reductively, that in fact what will be found are material determinants and productive forces), symptomatic readings (put even more simplistically, that the meaning of the text is there but, formally, it doesn't appear to be – it appears in its absences), and, finally, a strategic reading which doesn't 'find meaning' or 'presume meaning' but one which ultimately makes, of the text, its own.

The story is typically told as a historical one.[304] On the 27th April, 1934, Walter Benjamin organised an address to the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris entitled 'The Author as Producer'.[305] In it he begins by outlining a familiar argument – autonomy (writers write and readers read however they want) vs. commitment (that writers and readers can read and write, consciously – as a choice, in a political way). 'Pursuing a tendency' of commitment, however, he says is a 'totally inadequate instrument of political literary criticism'. This isn't exactly a universal claim, as he is specifically referring to 'the New Objectivity' (a post-expressionistic artistic movement of the mid-1920s in Germany[306]), which he argues 'launched the fashion for reportage' – loosely put, trying to report the truth without making any attempt to interpret it. He compares it to Dada which 'tested art for its authenticity' through an act of framing which challenged its audience to contemplate how they saw it (their relation to it). The New Objectivity, by refusing to judge, produced an 'article of consumption', not something about which we'd have to choose how to relate. He also cited Bertolt Brecht's 'epic theatre' as another

counter-example that 'disclosed and uncovered' conditions but not by reproducing them (literally, as realism, whether socialist or otherwise).[307]

Benjamin commented: "You may have noticed that the reflections whose conclusions we are now nearing make only one demand on the writer: the demand to think, to reflect upon his position in the production process." (Benjamin, 1998: 101) Thus, a simple argument – tendency vs. commitment – that to make effective political art you had to frame it so it challenged people to relate to it, to think about it. A revolutionary subject was not enough. He goes on: "We can be sure that such thinking, in the writers who matter – that is to say the best technicians in their particular branches of the trade – will sooner or later lead them to confirm very soberly their solidarity with the proletariat." (ibid.)[308]

A blind hope, and an understandable one – Hitler had been Chancellor of Germany, effectively dictator, for over a year. Benjamin was at the beginning of his exile, like his friends Brecht, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, all German Marxists forced to flee fascism. When Benjamin visited Brecht in Denmark in July, 1934, Brecht disagreed with Benjamin's prior analysis to some extent – saying that, for example, he felt in the poetry of Rimbaud that "Marx and Lenin, too – had they read it – would have detected the great historical moment of which it was an expression. They would have recognized very clearly that it does not describe the perambulations of an eccentric stroller, but the vagabond flight of a person who can no longer endure the limits of his class […]." (Demetz (ed.), 1986: 204)[309] Again, a simple argument. The reader can uncover things in a text, a text can disclose things. Things don't have to be spelled out and, to the extent that they are, that often reveals other concerns, other contradictions locatable in the text (or in how the audience relates to the text or any element of author / audience / text / society).

In 1962, Benjamin was 22-years dead (of suicide, in a horrifying moment where he thought he would be captured by the Nazis[310]), and his friend Adorno wrote an essay in response to the arguments of 'The Author as Producer' called 'Commitment'. The essay only names Benjamin once, in the very last sentence. It is a lengthy and convoluted essay, mostly dealing with Jean-Paul Sartre's unwillingness to confront the limits of commitment (in his 1947 essay 'What Is Literature?') and Brecht's failure to enact them in his theatre. It is commonly interpreted as a criticism of all directly political art.[311]

But such an interpretation is insufficient. It ignores a historical materialist reading of 'Commitment' which would highlight the specificity of Adorno's appeal to Germany in 1962, given that, in response to millions of East Germans fleeing to West Germany to escape the regime, the German Democratic Republic had now walled themselves off from the West[312] (and given, too, that Brecht had already died of a heart attack in 1956, after returning to live and work in Communist East Berlin in 1949). Secondly, the interpretation

overlooks what a close reading of the essay offers (now shearing it from its history[313]), a tentative resolution to the contradictions which present themselves to Adorno in the configuration of a desperate paradox. Finally, it elides what a symptomatic reading would infer – that Benjamin's apparent absence from the body of the essay and his singular appearance in the conclusion is deeply significant to the meaning of 'Commitment', particularly when you understand that what Adorno is referring to at the end is Benjamin's last significant work, written shortly before his death, on experiencing the catastrophic miscarriage of 'historical materialism', the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'.

There are no simple arguments here. Adorno does not believe in either conception as an absolute – autonomous art, 'art for art's sake', does not exist outside of reality ("The imagination of the artist is not a creation ex nihilo; only dilettanti and esthetes believe it to be so."; Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 314), while committed art 'cancels the distance between art and reality', i.e. pretends the consequences you propose in art can have the results you want in life[314]. In fact, he emphasises the former quite bluntly: "A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political." (ibid.: 301) Adorno does not posit these as the only alternatives, preferring to subtly redefine them. He distinguishes, following Benjamin (but without mentioning him): "In esthetic theory, 'commitment' should be distinguished from 'tendency'. Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions [...] but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes." (ibid.: 304)

This he identifies in Sartre:

> For Sartre, its task is to awaken the free choice of the agent, that makes authentic existence possible at all, as opposed to the neutrality of the spectator. But what gives commitment its esthetic advantage over tendentiousness also renders the content to which the artist commits himself inherently ambiguous. [...] In his literary theory, the work of art becomes an appeal to subjects, because it is itself nothing other than a declaration by a subject of his own choice or failure to choose. (ibid.: 304)

Then he turns to Brecht:

> Brecht wanted to reveal in images the inner nature of capitalism. In this sense, his aim was indeed what he disguised it as against Stalinist terror – realistic. He would have refused to deprive social essence of meaning by taking it as it appeared, imageless and blind, in a single crippled life. But this

burdened him with the obligation of ensuring that what he intended to make unequivocally clear was theoretically correct. His art, however, refused to accept this quid pro quo: it both presents itself as didactic, and claims esthetic dispensation from responsibility for the accuracy of what it teaches. (ibid.: 307)

This is the heart of the historical materialist reading – that Adorno is critiquing his now-dead friend (beyond help or hurt[315]) and saying publicly that Brecht 'bluntly glorified the Party' (ibid.: 306), 'preached to the converted' (ibid.: 308) and failed to show in his art what he was afraid to say in his life (and more generally, as important – and connected – from Adorno's point of view, that Brecht willingly returned to East Berlin and so became, again, subject to the Party):

For what he justified was not simply, as he long sincerely believed, an incomplete socialism but a coercive domination in which blindly irrational social forces returned to work once again. [...] The wild roar of *The Measures Taken* drowns out the noise of the disaster that has overtaken the cause, which Brecht convulsively tries to proclaim as salvation. Even Brecht's best work was infected by the deceptions of his commitment. Its language shows how far the underlying poetic subject and its message have come apart. (ibid.: 311)[316];

[...The] artistic principle of simplification not only purged real politics of the illusory distinctions projected by subjective reflection into social objectivity, as Brecht intended, but it also falsified the very objectivity which didactic drama labored to distil. If we take Brecht at his word and make politics the criterion by which to judge his committed theatre, by the same token it proves untrue. [...] The only ground on which Brecht's technique of reduction would be legitimate is that of 'art for art's sake', which his version of commitment condemns as it does Lucullus. (ibid.: 309)[317]

Adorno takes some solace in what he calls 'contemporary experimentalism', as a form of autonomous art; he begins with this story:

An officer of the Nazi occupation forces visited the painter in his studio and, pointing to *Guernica*, asked: 'Did you do that?'. Picasso reputedly answered, 'No, you did.' Autonomous works of art too, like this painting, firmly negate empirical reality, destroy the destroyer, that which merely exists and by merely existing endlessly reiterates guilt. It is none other than Sartre who has seen the connection between the autonomy of a work and an intention which is not conferred upon it but is its own gesture towards reality. (ibid.: 313)[318]

This he finds most compelling in the work of Kafka and Beckett ("The inescapability of their work compels the change of attitude which committed works merely demand"; 315[319]); ultimately, he argues, given 'German cultural traditions', autonomous art like this is to be preferred (in Germany in 1962[320]):

> Committed works all too readily credit themselves with every noble value, and then manipulate them at their ease. Under fascism, too, no atrocity was perpetrated without a moral veneer. [...][321] The notion of a 'message' in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world: the stance of the lecturer conceals a clandestine entente with the listeners, who could only be truly rescued from illusions by refusal of it. (ibid.: 317)

Adorno had seen for himself the failure of committed art (in Brecht); he had also discovered a loophole in the appreciation of autonomous art which renders it, despite its best efforts, strategically, politically useful – there did not need to be an accommodation, a marriage of convenience, between autonomous championing of creative genius and the materialist bind of commitment because autonomous art could always be read, à la Benjamin, 'against the grain', with commitment[322]:

> [Any] literature which therefore concludes that it can be a law unto itself, and exist only for itself, degenerates into ideology no less. [...But even] in the most sublimated work of art there is a hidden 'it should be otherwise'. [...] As eminently constructed and produced objects, works of art, even literary ones, point to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life. (ibid.: 317)

This reading is the practice which Hoggart calls critical literacy; this is the 'event of literature' which Eagleton dubs 'strategic'[323]. In fact, we can go further, releasing Adorno's historically-landlocked essay and sailing on to a distant shore (the conclusion of the aforementioned close reading). Adorno wrote: "Even if politically motivated, commitment in itself remains politically polyvalent so long as it is not reduced to propaganda, whose pliancy mocks any commitments by the subject." (ibid.: 302) The dangerous reefs of tendentious propaganda and its illusions were too real for Adorno; so, too, was the ambiguity of polyvalent, committed art and its share of illusions – they had been mapped for him by Benjamin and by his own experience.[324] His concerns were understandably manifest:

> Paul Klee too belongs to any debate about committed and autonomous art:
> for his work, écriture par excellence, has roots in literature and would not
> have been what it was without them – or if it had not consumed them. During

the First World War or shortly after, Klee drew cartoons of Kaiser Wilhelm as an inhuman iron eater. Later, in 1920, these became – the development can be shown quite clearly – the *Angelus Novus*, the machine angel, who, though he no longer bears any emblem of caricature or commitment, flies far beyond both. The machine angel's enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it. But, as Walter Benjamin, who owned the drawing, said, he is the angel who does not give but takes. (ibid.: 318)

*   *   *

This is the conclusion of Adorno's essay, and the end of my story. The materialist reading is, I think, responsible to the historical record and the close reading faithful to the arguments therein. If you stop reading there, though, the conclusion may seem like an abrupt full stop – or, worse, a dead-end. But in the strategic approach, ravelling around the symptomatic reading of the essay as a response to, or communication with, Benjamin,[325] there is a different story told, with a different ending. Adorno, who inherited the *Angelus*[326], was referring to Benjamin's comment on the angel 'who preferred to free men by taking from them, rather than make them happy by giving to them'; this allusive meaning is not spelled out by Adorno (hence, symptomatic) because it invokes the question of choice in committed art, the weight of the paradox which he found unbearable.[327] It is given voice here (hence, strategic) to enjoin Adorno and Benjamin's dialogue, engage with its conflict, and reach my own understanding.

The concept of the angel of history, the mechanical angel, denies the idealisation that everything happens 'once upon a time'. Despite the predilection of storytellers, 'once' is not all there is to choose from – all, in fact, from the point of view of the angel, is one. We still have a chance – we always have a choice – to look back upon that mess and rebuild it, to wake the dead and make them speak. This is not using the history of the past to explain the present and predict the future – this is using the historical present to define the past and protect the future. It is a blind hope because it requires turning your back on the future, but it is a necessary one.

I do not doubt that Adorno meant what he said but – even knowing the burden of that history (for Benjamin the terror of his death[328], Brecht the disillusionment of his complicity[329], Adorno the guilt of his survival) – I still say the opposite. We choose or fail to choose. Merely existing endlessly reiterates guilt, notwithstanding that a commitment which urges, that forces, people to take sides is inherently dangerous.

Responding to a perceived shift in Marshall McLuhan's work, from working towards social change in *The Mechanical Bride* (1951) to the future-facing, wide-lens that he

would come to apply in books like *Understanding Media* (1964), where history and the future were, broadly-speaking, just things that happened to people, Richard Hoggart wrote: "In the end we all choose, even when we refuse to choose; and our tone shows first the nature of our commitment." (Hoggart, 1970a: 116)

*   *   *

How does this play out? How does the dialogue still resonate in the world? In May, 2008, Nick Cohen wrote a scathing review of a performance of Brecht's *The Good Soul of Szechuan* at the Young Vic, perfectly exemplifying Adorno's anxiety:

> They laughed and clapped as Brecht eviscerated the corruptions of the market economy and traditional morality, and managed to look knowing without appearing to know anything. 'Don't they get it?' I thought as I watched them. 'Don't they know what happened?' After the closing lines, it seemed the cast was determined to shake them out of their suspended disbelief or wilful ignorance. An actor stepped forward. 'Something has happened to China,' he began. For a second I thought he was going to say that Brecht had got what he wanted and communism had happened to China. The tens of millions of dead in the Great Leap Forward, the murdered intellectuals of the Cultural Revolution, the enforcement on a whole people of the idolatrous worship of a smirking tyrant had happened. As it was, the actor merely said an earthquake had happened, and asked us to leave money in buckets by the door. (Cohen, 2008)

Cohen concludes:

> There are three possible responses to an artist who dedicated his life to a monstrous cause. The first is to deodorise him by pretending he was really a liberal humanist, which Brecht certainly was not. The second is to do what the British theatre never does and have an adult argument. […] The third option is to shrug and walk away […]. (ibid.)

In November 2009, in an article for the *New Statesman* on the election of Barack Obama to the American Presidency, Eagleton brilliantly evoked Benjamin:

> The German philosopher Walter Benjamin had the curious notion that we could change the past. For most of us, the past is fixed while the future is open. Benjamin thought that the past could be transformed by what we do in the present. Not literally transformed, of course […]. Short of some literal resurrection, the countless generations of men and women who have toiled and suffered for the benefit of the minority – the story of human history to

date, in fact – can never be recompensed for their wretched plight. What Benjamin meant was that how we act in the present can change the meaning of the past[330] [and also that, conversely, …] the past holds vital resources for the renewal of the present. (Eagleton, 2009)

This is what Eagleton argues the election of Obama represents, a changed past; though he predicted, accurately as it turned out, that we could "expect little from his administration in the way of real [, material changes …as the] US will remain a one-party state, whatever name the capitalist party happens to go under" (ibid.; to which we should add complicity for the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, the increasing gap between rich and poor, etc., etc.). As such, he warns against mistaking changes in meaning for an absolution of prior circumstance:

> Obama's victory does not make up for America's horrific racial past. The lynched, castrated and humiliated of earlier times can be granted no literal redemption. Our more optimistic ancestors sometimes thought of history as a kind of train, pulling us up from the dark valleys to the sunlit uplands. But if history is a train, then we need to commemorate those who never arrived at their destination – those who died in the sidings or jumped despairingly on to the tracks. (ibid.)

Eagleton, of course, does not believe in 'the train of history', whose 'progress' is the reverse of Benjamin's 'angel'. There is too much that contradicts its passage. Unlike Adorno, however, he has resolved the paradox of his own commitment (mostly it seems by learning from his mistakes; Adorno's 'mistake', survival, could not be so easily resolved). To Eagleton, the change is signposted by 'its internal contradictions': "[Obama's ascension] retrospectively rewrites the nation's narrative. But at the same time, it reminds us of an intolerable outrage: all that suffering and wretchedness was, in the end, for nothing. As Brecht said: 'This man's sufferings appal me because they are unnecessary.'" (ibid.) By giving the last word to Brecht, does Eagleton fail to indict Brecht's own compromise and complicity or does he merely 'wake him' (in that his suffering was also unnecessary) in our time? Both readings are possible – but can both be true?

Lastly, in May, 2013, Kameron Hurley published an excellent essay, called '"We Have Always Fought": Challenging the "Women, Cattle, Slaves" Narrative', about the presence of women in literature and society and the ways literature and society work to erase the real presence of women, the real lives and personalities and actions of women, from our cultural consciousness. She concludes: "You must be complicit in this erasure for it to happen. You, me, all of us. Don't let it happen. Don't be lazy." (Hurley, 2013)[331] Hurley isn't referencing Adorno or Benjamin or Brecht – she is writing very concisely, on her own

terms, about her experience of contemporary fiction. Her argument is not theoretically all-encompassing, it simply addresses the material and finds it wanting.

The point is, finally, that there are no guarantees, only choices. Any commitment in the creation of a work or production of art and any commitment in the event of reading (or decoding / receiving – hearing, viewing, participating, etc.) can fail to be meaningful. As with any communication, any gesture can be mistaken, be misread, be misunderstood. I would argue, for example, that *American Psycho* (1991) is a cutting critique of consumerism, but some disagree. I find *Blood Meridian* (1985) a hymn sung against the horrors of violence and war; some disagree. I don't think genre fiction is escapist, or that all fiction is escapist, any more than I think it necessarily interpellates the reader in the dominant discourses of the culture or imprisons them or alienates them. Or at least I don't think it has to. Some disagree.

*   *   *

In the spirit of the Eagletonian 'imp of the perverse' that enjoined him to use Fish to debate the limits of poststructural, deconstructive and postmodern thought, I would now like to turn briefly to Harold Bloom[332] and to some comments he made in a 1991 interview for *The Paris Review*:[333]

> Antonio Weiss: Do you think that fiction – or poetry for that matter – could ever die out?
>
> Harold Bloom: I'm reminded of that great trope of Stevens's in *The Auroras of Autumn*, when he speaks of a 'great shadow's last embellishment'. There's always a further embellishment. It looks like a last embellishment and then it turns out not to be – yet once more, and yet once more. One is always saying farewell to it, it is always saying farewell to itself, and then it perpetuates itself. One is always astonished and delighted. (Bloom, 1991)

Throughout this interview, Bloom argues against everything I've put forward in this chapter – ideas he would probably dismiss without a second thought. He states:

> Literature is not an instrument of social change or an instrument of social reform. It is more a mode of human sensations and impressions, which do not reduce very well to societal rules or forms. [...] Criticism is not a program for social betterment, not an engine for social change. I don't see how it possibly could be. If you look for the best instance of a socially radical critic, you find a very good one indeed in William Hazlitt. But you will not find that his social activism on the left in any way conditions his aesthetic judgments, or that he tries to make imaginative literature a machine for revolution. (ibid.)

I would argue that Bloom is wrong here, however, in part because he obviously doesn't want to live in a world where he might be wrong. The idea that art has no political impact and only aesthetic import is deeply flawed. True, few works of art are cluster bombs, exploding in the midst of their culture – they are more like biological weapons, viruses concocted in a lab.[334] But a lot of them do make the world a better place, not because of who they hurt but from how they challenge and inform, strengthen and connect. I disagree, in part, because I do not want to live in a world where they could not.

Bloom goes on:

> I still think, though no one in the world except me thinks so and no one's ever going to give me an award as a great teacher, I'm a pretty good teacher, but only in terms of the great Emersonian maxim 'that which I can receive from another is never tuition but only provocation'. I think that if the young woman or man listens to what I am saying, she or he will get very provoked indeed. (ibid.)

As provocations, the thoughts of Bloom and Adorno and Eagleton have all been immensely useful. Here is what Emerson actually says:

> Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or wholly reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing. (Emerson, 1893: 107)

But here's what he adds, just a few pages on:

> The divine bards are the friends of my virtue, of my intellect, of my strength. […] Noble provocations go out from them, inviting me to resist evil; to subdue the world; and to Be. (ibid.: 111)[335]

In other words, read your books and go take on the world. As Adorno put it, in his own gesture towards reality, create a just life.

Neither Bloom nor I do any real justice to the extraordinary beauty of Emerson's address to a religious college wherein he told them Jesus was just a man who found God in himself. The things I have claimed for literature are not absolutes or totalities. They are not factual claims. They are only moral claims, political, and theoretical ones.

'A FEUILLETON': FREDRIC JAMESON AND
AN ARGUMENT FOR ANTINOMIES

> Novels did not always exist in the past, nor must they necessarily always exist in the future; nor, always, tragedies; nor great epics; literary forms such as the commentary, the translation, yes, even the pastiche, have not always existed merely as minor exercises in the margin of literature, but have had a place, not only in the philosophical but also the literary traditions of Arabia or China. [...] All this to familiarize you with the idea that we are in the midst of a vast process in which literary forms are being melted down, a process in which many of the contrasts in terms of which we have been accustomed to think may lose their relevance.

Walter Benjamin, Anna Bostock (trans.), *Understanding Brecht* (1998: 89)[336]

> The misunderstanding would lie in imagining that [...] some 'synthesis' must necessarily follow on the proverbial thesis and antithesis; or else, at the outside limit, we will find ourselves forced to evoke a 'dialectic without a synthesis', as though that were not simply the nature of the dialectic tout court. [...] I want to add, returning to the beginning of this discussion, that I think notions of the mediation as a solution or bridge between contradictories are also something of a misunderstanding, and attribute to the dialectic philosophical and ontological ambitions it must not have: [...] the Brechtian position I have tried to outline here would I believe be more inclined to identify mediation and contradiction as such: where you can perceive a contradiction, there you already intuit the union of opposites, or the identity of identity and non-identity. Mediation is thus not some strange and fluid event in the world: it characterizes the way our spectatorship and our praxis alike construct portions of the world with a view towards changing them.

Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009: 290)

The opening lines of J.M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello* are these:

> There is first of all the problem of the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank. It is a simple bridging problem, a problem of knocking together a bridge. People solve such problems every day. They solve them, and having solved them push on. Let us assume that, however it may have been done, it is done. Let us take it that the bridge is built and crossed, that we can put it out of our mind. We have left behind that territory in which we were. We are in the far territory, where we want to be. (Coetzee, 2003: 1)[337]

It is very clear we are not in the far territory, 'where we want to be', as Coetzee writes; this, in fact, appears to be the point of *Elizabeth Costello* and is certainly the point of Eagleton ('grasping the present under the sign of its internal contradictions') and the Jameson quote above. Against this last part of the theoretical section of the thesis I must therefore interpose a 'feuilleton' – a technical term, not precisely a theoretical one, from the history of printing, which means a supplement or insert. Important to the history of serial novels[338], feuilletons would be slipped into the newspaper, folded in. Here we should fold in an essential addendum – that from a discussion of Eagleton and

commitment and 'the sign of irony', what is palpable in its absence is a concurrent discussion of Fredric Jameson and dialectics.

The idea of the antinomy – unresolvable contradictions, of incompatible truths – is at the heart of this use of the dialectic, which differs from those which presume some plausible / necessary synthesis, some ultimate resolution (Jameson refers to this, from time to time, as an 'arrested dialectic'; see Jameson, 1994: xii). As this might drift into more divisive philosophical and political waters, those of Kant, Hegel and Marx, in particular, which are unlikely to be of much use in a discussion of the future of novels,[339] no further critique of dialectics as a system of thought seems sensible. What I would say is this – that the concept 'post-novel' (much like the concept 'postmodern') can be approached dialectically, can be argued as a way of approaching the perceivable problem without presuming a particular outcome. The value of this is that it can be understood more clearly – at this point in history, before it has happened – through the contradictory impulses that point towards it than by assuming its necessity or inevitability. Here we can rely on Jameson, writing in *The Seeds Of Time*:

> It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations. […] I have come to think that the word postmodern ought to be reserved for thoughts of this kind. […] Postmodernism as an ideology […] is better grasped as a symptom of the deeper structural changes in our society and its culture as a whole – or in other words in the mode of production. Inasmuch as those changes still remain tendencies, however, and our analyses of actuality are governed by the selection of what we think will persist or develop, any attempt to say what postmodernism is can scarcely be separated from the even more problematic attempt to say where it is going – in short, to disengage its contradictions, to imagine its consequences (and the consequences of those consequences), and to conjecture the shape of its agents and institutions in some more fully developed maturity of what can now at best only be trends and currents. All postmodern theory is thus a telling of the future, with an imperfect deck. (Jameson, 1994: xii)[340]

This weakness of imagination that Jameson prods at could also help indict any number of other global catastrophes and human tragedies, including the question of illiteracy. It is difficult to understand, to invert the logic of his comment, why we have not done more to eradicate it – except to underscore, of course, those contradictions of our competitive cultures that appear to stall and stymie us.

This brings us back to the far smaller question of whether we are imminently post-novel, an assumption seemingly different in character, given the technological preconditions of the contemporary era, from the other 'deaths' of the novel raised in the thesis. That it is being assumed by some (as in the 'Gutenberg Parenthesis', drawing parallels between the pre-print era and our own 'post-print' digital media spaces, etc.) but that it has not been acted upon, at least in terms of a popularly taken-up text-based narrative fictive successor – online writing communities, collaborative novels and mobile phone novels, etc., notwithstanding – designates a fairly obvious contradiction. Commentators such as author Will Self, in 'The novel is dead (this time it's for real)', argue the long view (telescopically), that it is merely a contradiction still undergoing resolution:

> Ours is an age in which omnipresent threats of imminent extinction are also part of the background noise – nuclear annihilation, terrorism, climate change. So we can be blinkered when it comes to tectonic cultural shifts. The omnipresent and deadly threat to the novel has been imminent now for a long time – getting on, I would say, for a century – and so it's become part of culture. During that century, more books of all kinds have been printed and read by far than in the entire preceding half millennium since the invention of movable-type printing. If this was death it had a weird, pullulating way of expressing itself. […] The form should have been laid to rest at about the time of *Finnegans Wake*, but in fact it has continued to stalk the corridors of our minds for a further three-quarters of a century. Many fine novels have been written during this period, but I would contend that these were, taking the long view, zombie novels, instances of an undead art form that yet wouldn't lie down. (Self, 2014)

Comparing Jameson to Self is instructive here – to Self, global catastrophe is background noise, inevitability creeps glacially, volcanic eruptions only seem sudden. Thus for Self – on narrative fiction following McLuhan here, upholding the pre-eminence of the medium (over the message) – 'screens' had long ago triumphed over novels (*Finnegans Wake* is roughly the point in time when television begins broadcasting in Britain). In fact, the problem was bigger than novels, it was our whole culture that wouldn't wake up to itself:

> The literary critic Robert Adams observed that if postmodernism was to be regarded as a genuine cultural era, then it made modernism itself a strangely abbreviated one. After all, if we consider that all other western cultural eras – classicism, medieval, the Renaissance – seem to average about half a millennium a piece, it hardly matters whether you date modernism's onset to Rousseau, Sturm und Drang or *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, it clearly still has a

long way to go. By the same token, if – as many seem keen to assert – postmodernism has already run its course, then what should we say has replaced it, post-postmodernism, perhaps? It would seem better all round to accept the truth, which is that we are still solidly within the modernist era, and that the crisis registered in the novel form in the early 1900s by the inception of new and more powerful media technologies continues apace. (ibid.)[341]

Self's assumptions belie the complexity of how we, and people in other time periods, view time ('the Renaissance invented the Middle Ages', as Brian Stock put it[342]). The critical idea that periodising / aestheticising categories (or informational densities, as we might now think of them) are dictated by their usefulness and our willingness to actualise them[343] does not lessen the utility of 'naming the age' (explaining the world to itself in its own immediate terms, in an immanent critique[344]). Unlike 'the Roaring '20s' or 'the Great Depression', however, postmodernism is not only a name for an era, it is one that, in Jameson at least, stands for its critique. Ultimately, Self's vision of the future, more cynical than critical, is essentially Philip Roth's revisited (Brown, 2009):

As I said at the outset: I believe the serious novel will continue to be written and read, but it will be an art form on a par with easel painting or classical music: confined to a defined social and demographic group, requiring a degree of subsidy, a subject for historical scholarship rather than public discourse. The current resistance of a lot of the literate public to difficulty in the form is only a subconscious response to having a moribund message pushed at them. As a practising novelist, do I feel depressed about this? No, not particularly, except on those occasions when I breathe in too deeply and choke on my own decadence. I've no intention of writing fictions in the form of tweets or text messages – nor do I see my future in computer-games design. […] Besides, as the possessor of a Gutenberg mind, it is quite impossible for me to foretell what the new dominant narrative art form will be – if, that is, there is to be one at all. (Self, 2014)[345]

For Self, reading and writing (serious) novels will be solitary pursuits out of place, at best, in an imagined communal, connected future (the obvious inherent contradiction being that most people's use of the internet, the technology of connection, is as solitary in a physical sense as novel-reading).[346] In a dialectical sense, however, the flow of his argument (and McLuhan's and others, and my own through much of this thesis) that just around the corner is a technology – the 'new medium' – that will take us post-novel, even if we have to wait decades or centuries for it to be realised, forecloses on the possibilities even as it assumes their existence. Jameson states:

Contradiction is always one step before representation: if you show it in its conflicted moment, you freeze it over so rigidly that it tends to take on the form of the antinomy. If on the contrary you anticipate its resolution, you empty it of all its negativity and generate the impression of a rigged ballot, a put-up job, a sham conflict whose outcome has already carefully been arranged in advance. (Jameson, 1994: 5)

In other words – a fixed fight, or bad faith. While writing this thesis I have read countless foretellings and forecasts, prophecies, predictions and projections,[347] and what was common to them, and what is actually important, is not that one or some of them will turn out to be accurate but that the assumptions we make as we look forward into the future not go unrecognised or unchallenged. Here is a prediction, in *New Scientist*, from the poet Herbert Read (in a more moralising vein than McLuhan but similar in instinct):

Meanwhile the arts, in any historical meaning of the word, will have disappeared. Already in 1964 few people read books for pleasure; they 'use' them, or even 'view' them (books will have more and more pictures and less and less text). […] Fiction, even now a dwindling form of entertainment, will fade out and the only writers will be scriptwriters for the television screen. […] There will be lights everywhere except in the mind of man, and the fall of the last civilisation will not be heard above the incessant din. (Read quoted in Hoggart, 1970a: 107)[348]

And here is a projection, this time by Charles Hummel, a member of the UNESCO Executive in 1977:

A few years ago, everybody expected that in a short time education would be completely revolutionized by new educational technologies – from audio-visual techniques to using computers. There have indeed been some changes and innovations due to modern technologies. But much fewer than had been expected. Up to now, education systems have proved surprisingly resistant to the inroads of educational technology. It is therefore unlikely that any great changes can be expected from them in the future. (Hummel, 1977: 186)

And here, finally, is Terry Eagleton:

If you say there are no real material determinants here, that it's just a matter of who won out, then of course it's simply wishful thinking to say it could be different in the future: you have no historical evidence for that at all. What you can say in a materialist argument is that if it is to be different in the

future, these different material conditions will have to prevail. (Tredell, 1994: 144)

My argument throughout this thesis has been one sympathetic to Eagleton's materialist position. In the final analysis, however, this position requires a leavening of Jameson (put in the narrative terms of realism): the notion that the story can only have one ending arises from how, in trying to resolve contradictions, we failed to create new possibilities.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

> It is second nature to us to compare texts as a way to find contradictions, to contrast texts as way to understand differences. It is at the core of what education is, to imagine literacy in the sense of [remixing…] texts as a way to understand what they [mean…]. This is what this [digital] architecture invites. […] Imagine this cut and paste culture, imagine this world where that power is spread broadly, where that is ordinary, where the ability to engage in this form of speech is wide-spread and our culture is facile with it – not in the sense that some of these examples are facile, but in the sense that people are really good at it. Imagine that future.
>
> Here is the problem with imagining that future. Right now, those activities, those forms of expression, those kinds of creativity, are all basically illegal. It is illegal to engage in that kind of creativity. These new uses of technology are illegal under the laws as they exist right now. […] To engage in this act of creativity you need permission first. Permission is not coming.
>
> **Professor Lawrence Lessig, 'The Vision for the Creative Commons: What are We and Where are We Headed? Free Culture', collected in Fitzgerald (ed.)** ***Open Content Licensing: Cultivating the Creative Commons*** **(2007: 38-41)**

'Only two things the people anxiously desire, bread and circuitry…'[349] What happens to the work of art in the age of digital reproduction? What happens to the concept of the work of art in an age where a huge proportion of the global population produce and reproduce their culture (and themselves) on the internet? What does it mean to choose when you seemingly have access to everything?[350] What if you didn't have access?

When we imagine the future we are always left with questions without answers – and with answers which complicate and contradict one another.[351] We have, as Jameson says, an imperfect deck. That an end to endemic structural problems like illiteracy and the perceived imminence of technological advancement both have a sense of inevitability and yet remain mired and thwarted in the present is a clear indication that our reading of the cards is incomplete. As for the future of narrative fiction, we have to ask again the question of realism, the tributary that became the mainstream, and how it has been sidelined if not entirely outmanoeuvred by 'pulp' stories of otherworldliness[352] and attempts to describe more radical differences and possibilities. Any basic metacommentary[353] on the narrative fiction of the present would immediately note (and confirm by the most casual glance at a bookstore or library) that, whatever their

readership and however influential their reach, fantastic and speculative fiction are still seen as the alternative, even aberrant, choice.[354]

Realism is, as Jameson notes, "a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal"[355] (Jameson, 2013: 9) – with, he says, fatal consequences for both[356] – and it is unsurprising that readers who want the world 'and everything in it' continue to feel reassured by such a representative mode (and that, broadly speaking, modernist and postmodernist fictions reaffirm it even as they assail it) while being left perpetually uneasy by the contradictory implication of its claims.[357] It is, and has been for a long time, in a state of crisis but it is not (despite Self's feelings of exhaustion) a nightmare from which it can wake up:

> Realism is a consequence of the tension between [destiny and the eternal present…]; to resolve the opposition either way would destroy it […]. And this is also why it is justified to find oneself always talking about the emergence or the breakdown of realism and never about the thing itself, since we will always find ourselves describing a potential emergence or a potential breakdown. (ibid.: 22)

In this thesis I have also referred to these motifs – these motivations, these problems, these beginnings and endings – as historical inevitability and the timelessness (and limitlessness) engendered in 'the contemporary'; or, described as antinomies: a fixed fight versus one where the first blow never lands. These are the true antinomies of the future of narrative fiction, the predictive and the speculative; the far territory, if one exists, lies beyond them.

CONCLUSION:
'ON AGENCY MODELS... (IMPRIMATUR)'

The extraordinary assertions within UNESCO's Constitution – that governments will collectively promote the objective pursuit of knowledge and its free circulation – are redolent of their [post-war] time. [...] The impulse, in 1945, to try to ensure that it did not happen again, and that people should understand each other better through improved education and all forms of cultural and scientific exchanges [...] – these impulses were almost irresistible.

Richard Hoggart, *An Idea And Its Servants* (1978: 27)

Illiterate in this instance [...] points less to the lack of technical skills and the absence of certain competencies than to a deficit in the realms of politics – one that subverts both critical thinking and the notion of literacy as both critical interpretation and the possibility of intervention in the world. [...] This is a form of illiteracy marked by the inability to see outside of the realm of the privatized self, an illiteracy in which the act of translation withers, reduced to a relic of another age [..., where everyday] politics is decoupled from its democratic moorings and it becomes more difficult for people to develop a vocabulary for understanding how private problems and public issues constitute the very lifeblood of a vibrant politics and democracy itself. This is worth repeating. Emptied of any substantial content, democracy appears imperilled as individuals are unable to translate their privately suffered misery into genuine public debate, social concerns and collective action. This is a form of illiteracy that is no longer marginal to [...] society but is increasingly becoming one of its defining and more frightening features. [...] The new illiteracy is about more than not knowing how to read the book or the word; it is about not knowing how to read the world. The challenge it poses in a democracy is one of both learning how to reclaim literacy so as to be able to narrate oneself and the world from a position of agency.

Henry A. Giroux, 'The Spectacle of Illiteracy and the Crisis of Democracy' in *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism* (2011: 84-87)

Are there analogous antinomies that inhere in the problem of global illiteracy? Perhaps so – reading the reports of the OECD and UNESCO, and considering the struggles that the UN still faces, 40 years after Persepolis, with their Education For All and Education First Initiatives and 2030 Agenda provide pause. The most recent numbers, drawn from the '5-Year Mandate of GEFI Digital Report' (GEFI, 2016a) count 757 million adults who cannot read or write, 250 million children who lack basic skills, and 124 million children and youth out of school, 63 million of them living in conflict-affected countries. The perceived remedy for this – an annual financing gap to provide 12 years of free, quality education – currently stands at $39 billion. But even if the money could be found, literacy as a human right and literacy at the service of the economy are very different goals and imagine different outcomes (not the least of which is 'mechanical ability' against 'critical and creative faculty'; see also UNESCO, 2016a).

Are they outright contradictions? To some extent they are but, like the question of public libraries as boon or sop to the industrial working class, it is a vexed one. One reason, as discussed, is that the idea of authorship and intellectual property are historically comingled and arguably elementally confused. That this still has force is uncontroversial – we live in an era of (late) capitalism; that to their annual International

Day of Literacy, organised and celebrated annually since 1966, UNESCO chose to append a World Book and Copyright Day in 1995,[358] speaks ideological volumes.[359] However, so too does the creation of even more contemporary, internationally celebrated literacy 'holidays' – such as Public Domain Day, Book Giving Day, Read Aloud Day, Children's Book Day and Novel Writers Month, etc. These small acts of resistance and reclamation by no means balance or outweigh humanity's unsteady 'progression' towards universal 'development' but they depict in miniature our global state of uncertainty, of being in two minds.

In fact, the shuttering and downsizing and reallocating of resources of public libraries illustrates this even more clearly: whereas burning a library is considered an act of barbarism (the burning of books – from Alexandria to *Fahrenheit 451* to mobs and soldiers in the streets of Baghdad and Cairo and Timbuktu[360] – is still our instinctual metaphor for the savage violence humanity wilfully inflicts on itself), current attitudes toward the survival of libraries seem ambivalent at best. Our era of dematerialisation has become the new 'slow fire', a reckless resignation to collective witlessness: 'if people aren't reading paper books then we don't really need them'. The contradiction is staggering, if literacy is a human right unattained by hundreds of millions, and libraries and their books – gardens and temples, and the reason for temples, as Borges calls them (1973: 83-85) – an almost irrelevancy.[361] Is it only because, as Lessig suggests, that other literacies have arisen; if so, where is the necessary defence of that public space, where are those collective traditions upheld and technologies circulated? Children are being taught to navigate the internet in school, but there is little discussion being had of their right to it.[362]

On September 8, 2016, UNESCO launched their latest coracle against the perceived tide, the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL), a 'multi-stakeholder' partnership for literacy to 'ensure long-term global literacy efforts'. To this end, GAL is being organised to 'harness the potential of technology' in a bid to increase access and agency in the programmatic pursuit of literacy. It was born, as they say, "from deep concern […] at the fact that the world's literacy agenda remained unfinished" (UNESCO, 2016b; ASPBAE, 2016); the antinomy remains: as long as our society puts a price-tag on the value of the 'free circulation of knowledge', and as long as we are therefore unwilling to 'collectively promote its objective pursuit', how *could* it ever be finished?

*   *   *

In its deliberate, chimeric constraints this has proved a complicated thesis to write, with all the depths and difficulties that accompany an interdisciplinary approach. It initially explored the historical argument that the prevailing narrative technology (paper,

the printing press, the steam-powered rotary press, pulp, paperbacks, web pages, mobile phones, etc.) changes not only how we read 'novels' but ultimately affects the content; it touched upon the idea that even if, in the future, we move 'post-novel' (radically shifting to a different narrative format, language-use or mode of collaborative and public writing and reading experience) we may nonetheless continue to use the term or idea of a 'novel' to describe our narratives (that the novel, like the book, is essentially only a container for the interior experience; however they come across, we will still tell stories); and it probed the anxiety that accompanies our contemporary prioritisation of fantastic and speculative fiction (which, while by no means universal, is a demonstrable shift from the realist or modernist works of the past).

It also sought out (dialectically speaking) the weaknesses of those arguments – that change does not happen without choices being made; that the future of the novel – whatever we call it, or whatever we call whatever succeeds it, is of little interest or value without simultaneously concerning ourselves with the future of literacy; and that, whatever the future, however it is written, the anxieties and contradictions of the present (that must first concern us) will never be the end of the argument, never have 'the last word'.

These cultural and technological 'deaths of the novel', overlaid with the perennial 'death of literature', the proper uses of language and literacy (expiring from mass production and the distraction of other entertainments), was for a moment balanced against the argument that the 'death of the novel' was always already a signifier of its incipient rebirth. It was the perceived meaning of a story, epic and episodic, which arced from Henry James and Walter Besant arguing the 'art of fiction' (Besant and James, 1885), when novelists were indeed novel, to China Miéville, four years ago, foreseeing a future where writing was no longer 'special' because, paradoxically, it had become essential, fundamental.

On reflection, this balancing act was flawed, overly hopeful, improperly utopian, imaginary, because the 'further embellishment' Harold Bloom speaks of has no guarantee. Specifically, contemporary concerns like the 'death of author-ity' in the digital revelation of a generation of writers / remixers who comment as much as they create (who comment and congregate as part of their creativity), set against the constricting coils of corporate-feedback ebook models where readers 'choose their own exploitations' ('death by self-application'), are proof enough that our constellations have already shifted.

To reiterate, as argued from Eagleton and Jameson, and Adorno and Benjamin, these things must not be seen as a mere matter of historical inevitability, and, however neat a formula exists (e.g. 'availability, affordability and time'), we must resist reading the past

as materially decisive for the present we have inherited, that which we consent to, that which we allow. The technological genius of Audible's 'WhisperSync for Voice' (swapping from text to audio, 'to make the most of our time') must not drown out the 'fiery whisper' that troubled Ted Hughes as he raged against the passing away of the public library. The future of narrative fiction, of the novel by any other name and in any other form, is not, with any specificity, assured.

Likewise, whatever rebirth may be possible in the cultural overlap between author and reader (in commonality, or communality), we still have to face up to the present market realities of copyright and IP and DRM, of globally-impacting free trade agreements, of the political reverberations and ideological resonance of conflicts like the *Authors Guild v. Google*, and the *United States v. Apple, Inc.* We have to be sceptical, if not outright cynical – at the least, at the very least, critical – when confronted with Hachette's 'the book is not simply a consumable product like any other' weighing in against Amazon's 'self-publishing' as a form of rugged individualism.[363] The lesson of the prospective chapters – that it is not just about measurements, it's what we do with them – goes doubly for ideologies and what we make of them. We are in the eye of the storm called progress.

*   *   *

To again reiterate: even when the changes are sudden and severe, they must not be seen as inevitable. The architecture of the internet (digital, wireless, etc.) might indeed have already confirmed the 'death' of paper books, but it more urgently entails a rethinking of so much else. It is in fact not, or no longer, a question of screens vs. books but a question of how best to look at the big picture: illiteracy, not as a culturally two-tiered problem, ranging developed against developing nations, but encountered under the much bigger claim – 'What is literacy for?' This claim necessitates, as Hoggart (and Freire and Giroux, and others) have argued, a programmatic approach to literacy: 'critical literacies for all'.[364]

This is not to debate that the problems of illiteracy don't affect some cultures, some countries, some people far worse than others. It is to conclude, categorically, that the problems of illiteracy are everyone's problems. Certainly, contemporary experiences of technology are distinctly tiered – not only in access to the internet but conspicuously in the proliferation of mobile phones, tablets and other 'computers', to the extent that there are simultaneous generations being born that will either, on the one hand, perhaps never touch a computer or, on the other, find them invisible in their ubiquity. But this is where programs and experiments like One Laptop Per Child and 'Nell' create exciting hope for an equitable future, for where the Harvard / Collier Shelf and the economical Penguin / Pelican paperbacks were past generations' attempts to harvest and garner, to

share and educate[365], they have now all become the promise of one story, one experienced uniquely by every reader.

The struggle, broadly put, is one of access – public schools, public libraries, public access to the internet, public domain. It is a problem of the commons, as Slavoj Žižek provocatively argues:

> Communism is today not the name of a solution but the name of a problem: the problem of the commons in all its dimensions – the commons of nature as the substance of our life, the problem of our biogenetic commons, the problem of our cultural commons ('intellectual property'), and, last but not least, the problem of the commons as that universal space of humanity from which no one should be excluded. Whatever the solution might be, it will have to solve this problem. (Žižek, 2011: 481)[366]

Ironically, the so-called 'agency model' that gave the major publishers so much strife in their fight with Amazon is the other half of the perfect mixed metaphor for this: the main reason it seems we are no closer to realising Persepolis four decades on is that we, too, are mistaking the stability of a 'price structure' for the economy of its 'price-tag'. Or, to put it another way, one last time, we have resisted our own agency in imagining a new model. The OECD view, on balance, is that literacy makes for a more efficient economy; UNESCO's view is that it makes for a more equitable state.[367] A possible third, equidistant, point of reference – of no particular moment to either institution – is this: the future of narrative fiction, still the novel for now, is that of its readers in the fullness of their lives; so probably either both will thrive, or neither.

NOTES

[1] While this thesis begins with McLuhan, it does not particularly rely on his arguments or research; nonetheless, McLuhan provides a filter, which I have adopted throughout: "We are no more committed to one culture […] any more than to one book or to one language or to one technology. Our need today is, culturally, the same as the scientist's who seeks to become aware of the bias of the instruments of research in order to correct that bias." (McLuhan, 1962: 31)

[2] Roth is hardly alone in this outlook. Novelist Susan Cooper (*The Dark Is Rising*), two decades prior, gave a talk where she worried that the screen meant we would 'forget the importance of the book' (Cooper, 2013). Harold Bloom, in an interview in September, 2000, made much the same argument, specifying ebooks: 'the enemy of reading is the screen' (Baker, 2000). There are also those who side, more or less, with McEwan. See, for example, Gaiman, 2013.

[3] Beginning with McLuhan leads by inference to Walter J. Ong, a student of and inspiration to McLuhan. Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (originally published in 1982) succinctly summarises this premise, charting the rise and fall of the epic, the romance and the novel ('clearly a print genre') as technology changes 'modes of thought and expression': "Over the centuries, the shift from orality through writing and print to electronic processing of the word has profoundly affected and, indeed, basically determined the evolution of verbal art genres, and of course simultaneously the successive modes of characterization and of plot. […Study] and understanding of […these patterns] will throw light not only on verbal art forms and thought forms of the past but also on those of the present and possibly even of the future." (Ong and Hartley, 2015: 155-156)

[4] Margaret Atwood puts the simple argument best: "Reading and writing has always changed depending on how it was delivered. […] The medium also dictates who has the ability to read and write and what gets written. […] People are always scared of new technology […but every] time technology changes, it changes what people in the plot can do." (Atwood and Lacy, 2012) Of course, the perceivable connection between strictly technological form and authorial content is only a drop in the ocean on which sails the literary-critical argument of 'form and content' aesthetic relationships.

[5] This idea is hotly contested. The popular view can be found in statements such as Mark Turner's in *The Literary Mind*: "Narrative imagining – story – is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend on it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining […]." (Rushkoff, 2013: 13). Jack Goody, on the other hand, makes a strong, scholarly case for the negative, defining narrative "not so much a universal feature of the human situation as one that is promoted by literacy and subsequently by printing." (Moretti (ed.), 2006: 3). Narrativity, Goody finds, is not a prominent characteristic of most oral cultures, only written ones; in oral cultures, narrative typically has a ceremonial function, not a fictive one (ibid.: 5-16). However, the sharp distinctions he draws for narrative and novel are arguable, too limiting in the connections we need to make between the past and the present that can give us a sense of the future. According to Goody's logic, terms we currently attach to things like the novel, fiction, storytelling etc. inevitably lose their capacity to describe or relate to their prospective equivalents; this can arguably be mitigated by a renewed commitment to ensuring the recognition of cultural and historical specificity, while nonetheless promoting and embracing literature and literacy in their ever-evolving forms.

[6] These descriptions of Watt and McKeon are actually Fredric Jameson's in *The Antinomies of Realism* (Jameson, 2013: 6); I worried over not including a more substantial response to them, until I read *The Antinomies* and remembered that I was not, in fact, actually writing a history (though they are the standard by which traditional histories of the European novel are judged). To return to Goody, momentarily: if we can make the obvious connections between the word 'novel' (meaning 'news') coming into the English language in the 15th century (around the 'advent of the printing press') and its usage with nevertheless distinctly different forms of storytelling in the centuries that follow (short tales, long prose works) while also identifying the correlations between 16th-century Chinese novels and 17th-century Spanish novels and 18th-century English novels, and so on, it insinuates that a more flexible approach to 'the novel' is to be preferred. This in no way erases or effaces the history of a Western understanding of 'the novel' solidifying

in the 18th century and continuing to hold a particular meaning even today, despite considerable alterations to form and format. (Moretti (ed.), 2006: 18-21)

[7] While this appears generically true of Watt, it is only ex post facto true of McKeon. Watt's exploration of an English-language development of the novel succinctly defines its terms (2000: 9-11, then 12-34), thus limits what can be included. Watt's groundbreaking interrelation of literacy, education, class and the reading public (however 'brief and tentative'; ibid.: 35-42), has, on the other hand, been subjected to a more energetic historical critique, remediated by McKeon (1988: 2-4, 11-22) using the Marxist form of the dialectic. It is not, as Watt has it, that the rise of the novel and the rise of the middle-class are one and the same (ibid.: 2), it is rather that 'their arrival' masks their 'considerable pre-existence' – or to put another aspect of it in another way: "the emerging novel internalizes the emergence of the middle class and the concerns that it exists to mediate" (ibid.: 20). McKeon is cognisant of how history appears 'from our end' (ibid.: 19) but despite his critical self-awareness and familiarity with precursor novels (ibid.: 29-39) there is still somehow a sense where McKeon's history reinforces the specific significance of the novel's 'English language' development, his title and topic. Yet that sense is mostly wrong of McKeon – and potentially unfair of Watt, too.

[8] See also Darnton, 1990: 107-113, 125-135.

[9] Our record of reading and writing goes back to Southern Mesopotamia in the late fourth millennium BC, whereafter one of the first authors we know of to sign a work, Enheduanna, provides another potent metaphor for contemporary understandings of literature and literacy, for whether she wrote out her poems herself or worked collaboratively with scribes, remains unknown. (Jack, 2012: 23, 25)

[10] To give one example of this 19th-century attitude, Walter Besant declaimed in *The Art of Fiction*: "Let us, however, go outside this room, among the multitudes by whom a novelist has never been considered an artist at all. To them the claim that a great novelist should be considered to occupy the same level as a great musician, a great painter, or a great poet, would appear at first a thing ludicrous and even painful." (Besant and James, 1885: 5) The 'pirate edition' I'm quoting from also contains Henry James's far-better-known essay in response to Besant's original lecture and their dialogue has proven pivotal in the history of literary criticism (reductively, what characterises a novel qua novel are more 'recognitions' than 'rules' per se). It is testament to the passionate insights of James (and, controversially, to the 19th-century influence of Transatlantic 'piracy publishing') that the phrase 'art of fiction' has persisted as shorthand for the argument itself; for example, as the tagline on the great literary interviews of *The Paris Review* since 1953.

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[11] Translations of these few lines in English are not uncommon (see Wilding, 2008: 108) but I have struggled to find any complete translation. If you read the lines in French, you can see that people rarely translate the full verse, and it also suggests a different reading, given the context of Sainte-Beuve's affair with Hugo's wife, if the line about Hugo is interpreted literally – 'in the middle of whispers' rather than 'tumult'.

[12] Sainte-Beuve concludes with this line, more haunting given the details of his own life (which is, arguably, the way he would have contended we read it): "[Of] some one of them shall we ask a friendship which never deceives, which could not fail us; to some one of them shall we appeal for that sensation of serenity and amenity (we have often need of it) which reconciles us with mankind and with ourselves." (Sainte-Beuve, 1892: 12)

[13] See Pushkarevskaya-Naughton, 2010: 130; see also 132-133, 135-138.

[14] See Sterne, 1883: 69-70; Eagleton, 1981: 16; Carroll, 1893: 131-133.

[15] To the extent that the novel is a 'Western' form 'the death of the novel' is thus, for the most part, a historically 'Western' concern (Arac, 2011: 6-7); its 'Western' ramifications are now being increasingly minimised in the presumably contentious arguments of 'post-autonomous literature', having "dismantled any possible claims for literature as an immanent succession of works in time, as the repository of transhistorical truths about the human condition, as a discourse that reveals the ambivalent nature of language, or as a cultural horizon that necessarily engages reality from a critical perspective" (Alonso, 2011:

3). Postcolonial (pre-post-autonomous) implications for the novel and fiction, similarly, were not one and the same in 'the West' and 'non-West' but if the past history was arguably a divided one it is implicit that the future will be marked both by its divisions of diversity and its unity of that specific recognition (Fleissner, 2011: 11-12; Gikandi, 2011: 14-16).

[16] See also Carrière and Eco, 2012: 124-125, 200-201.

[17] New media are typically prophesied as being detrimental to reading habits; generally speaking, however, they tend to stimulate them. See Jack, 2012: 282-283; Eisenstein, 2011a; Watt, 2000: 42-43.

[18] Bradbury forbade Simon & Schuster from selling *Fahrenheit 451* as an ebook unless they made it available to libraries. It was then, for over a year, the only ebook they made available. (Flood, 2011; DBW, 2012a)

[19] The 'classic' history of the book (as opposed to the 'novel') was written by Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du Livre* (or, under its English title, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*). Originally published in 1958, it marked the 'rise' of books just four years before McLuhan's account of their 'fall' in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*.

[20] For a condensed history, see Jack, 2012: 118-123; for a longer history see Fussel, 2003.

[21] Atkinson and Fitzgerald, 2014: 16-27; McLeod, 2011: 23-27; van Gompel (120-121) and Pfister (169-171) in Kretschmer et al., 2010. This distinction between secular and religious censorship is somewhat anachronistic; i.e. over several hundred years following the 15th century, laws were passed in England, for example, restricting the printing of books – sometimes for crass mercantile reasons of protectionism and monopoly and sometimes for crass religious reasons, viz. protectionism and monopoly.

[22] A truism, or bromide: "Nobody is today prepared to say even what it was that Gutenberg invented." (McLuhan, 1962: 154; see also Febvre and Martin, 1984: 49-59)

[23] See Borges, 2000: 360; McLuhan, 1962: 43, 82-97; Carrière and Eco, 2012: 113; Ong and Hartley, 2015: 154-155. While the historical-cultural and technological implications of the movement between oral (scribal, manuscript culture) and print traditions of reading (typographical, print+paper culture) are virtually impossible to overemphasise, oral traditions are still alive, as with book readings and audio books.

[24] For deeper insight into Manutius, his rivalries and innovations, see Kostylo in Kretschmer et al., 2010: 26-27; Johnstone, 2003; Magno, 2013.

[25] Both popular wood-cut print and more complicated and costly copperplate engraving accompanied books of the 15th and 16th centuries. In the 17th the wood-cut had all but disappeared and copperplate shaped Europe's future, through accurate reproductions of art, maps, paper money and the construction of celebrity-via-portrait (Febvre and Martin, 1984: 90-104; McLuhan, 1962: 78).

[26] Borges, an exceptional writer of short fiction, poetry and non-fiction, did not write novels – he thought they were a genre that would "very likely disappear" (Sorrentino, 2010: 112; though the book, the 'extension of our imagination and memory', must survive: Borges and Alifano, 1984: 32-35; see also Borges, 2000: 55). As to the past, while he identifies a turn towards the nominalist, the individual, and the specific at the root of the novel, after Chaucer in the 14th-century, this date represents only one fixed point, as he later demonstrated by writing poignantly of the 12th-century Scandinavian novel (ibid.: 381; see also Watt, 2000: 13).

[27] In 1909, Charles Eliot and William Allan Neilson of Harvard University and the publisher Collier collaborated in a resounding act of modernist canonisation whose effects we can arguably still see today, a 51-volume set of textbooks that could effectively equal a 'liberal education'; literature – the so-called Shelf of Fiction – was a later 20-volume addition (1917). Eliot argued, for the publishing of the latter, that what distinguished the selections from *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, *Don Quixote* and the fables of the Brothers Grimm (etc.) in the original collection from this later set was 'a character quite distinct from that of the 19th-century novel, romance, or story' (Eliot, 'General Introduction', 2000: n. pag.), which is questionable.

[28] McLuhan goes on to immediately contextualise this: "When Ben Jonson published his plays as the *Works of Ben Jonson* in 1616, there was much derisive comment." (McLuhan, 1962: 19; see also Arac, 2011: 6); Borges makes a similar comment in his lecture 'The Enigma of Shakespeare', noting that Shakespeare, like Cervantes, 'was almost invisible to his contemporaries'. This is because "every era believes that there is a literary genre that has a kind of primacy. Today, for example, any writer who has not written a novel is asked when he is going to write one. […] In Shakespeare's time, the literary work par excellence was the vast epic poem, and that idea persisted into the eighteenth century […]." (Borges, 2000: 470-471) As with screenwriters for the cinema, the playwrights of the Elizabethan period were, put simply, less visible; a change we can also identify in how the internet is now being written upon.

[29] Another example would be Alice Randall's 'unauthorised' ('slave voice') retelling of *Gone With The Wind*, *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), which ended up in litigation, as compared to Alexandra Ripley's authorised (bestselling and boring) bodice-rumpling sequel, *Scarlett* (2001). See Miller, 2001.

[30] Fredric Jameson in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013: 7) identifies the tendency to correlate realism and the novel as entwined 'modern' forms. This is largely because our experience (and our definition) of realism has been anchored (culturally, politically) by 'a historical, or periodizing, character' secured by its symbiosis with bourgeois society. That the consumerism of late capitalist society (as Jameson refers to the present) no longer supports such a connection effectively 'extinguishes' realism's 'privileged content'. Nonetheless, as argued, realism continues to be the form imagined to be at the centre of the modern novel.

[31] In contrast to this, Nancy Armstrong locates a distinct movement against 'domestic realism', in the works of Kazuo Ishiguro, W.G. Sebald, Ian McEwan, David Mitchell, Jon McGregor, Nicola Barker, etc. Armstrong argues: "Feeling the pressure and adopting the post-apocalyptic rhetoric of postcolonial fiction, these novels immerse us in worlds that render obsolete the very basis for identification that got us there. Community begins where the traditional apparatus of family ends." (Armstrong, 2011: 9) This may also be another marker for globalised narrative fiction.

[32] See Brown, 2004, 2010; Collins, 2011; James, 2012; Larsson, 2016; Meyer, 2008; Rowling, 1997, 2007. These six series (and this is in part because series tend to outsell other individual bestsellers over the length of their lifespan) were chosen by an amalgamation of the top fiction bestsellers as determined by sales figures / rankings that publishers (including the rankings on Amazon), industry groups / publications / websites (*Publishers Weekly*, *The Bookseller* etc.) and other periodicals of note (e.g. *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, who offer American rankings by survey of 'store' sales) have made available over the last 16 years. As to the content: while heroic orphans abound throughout the history of the novel, many of the other early-21st-century bestselling contenders have strikingly familial plots to the six series examined here. For example: James Patterson's *Alex Cross* crime novel series (1993-ongoing), Dean Koontz's modern *Frankenstein* (2005-2011) and *Odd Thomas* (2003-2015) novels, Rick Riordan's *Olympians* (2005-2015), Nora Roberts' *In Death* (1995-ongoing), Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999-2015), Charlaine Harris *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* or *True Blood* novels (2001-2014), and Stephen King's masterpiece, *The Dark Tower* (1982-2012).

[33] Jean-François Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* (1974) is about (under)taking a 'theoretical fiction' – in short, a metaphor – for how to interpret transformations in reality, how to understand as 'phantasies' and 'desires' the multiplicity and complexity of culture (the structure of the work is not unlike a bewildering punk cabbalist McLuhan in its array of modes; Lyotard, 1993: xii-xiv, 43-54, 103-107, 254-262). Arguably, Ana's psychosexual 'father-fixation' and conflicts of security and independence expose both 'feminine fantasies in an age of gender equality' and myths of recessive national cultures experiencing 'globalisation anxiety'.

[34] That is, Balzac's many novels read (as an act of reading) as an effectively complete or continuous text; and so too, to some extent, Zola's later *Les Rougon-Macquart* (1871-1893). Differences are arguably more definable at a distance. See Deleuze (following Proust, on Balzac), 2000: 164-165; Sally Ledger in Beaumont (ed.), 2007; and Schmidt, 2014: 358-361, 370.

[35] It is not so extraordinary that James lays claim to the classics – it is that *Fifty Shades*, one of the greatest publishing successes of the digital era, clearly arises from an act of obvious copyright infringement (Boog, 2012). This became an entirely ouroboric state of affairs in 2015, when Meyer published *Life and Death: Twilight Reimagined* and James published *Grey: Fifty Shades Of Grey As Told By Christian*, both books consisting of the plot of the original novels retold from different perspectives (Renfro, 2015).

[36] An inclination as opposed to a declination. George Orwell (1966: 143; originally 1946) notes that "any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism" but argues "an effect can become a cause […]. The point is that the process is reversible." Framing it as an inclination presupposes a progressive approach to language; in other words, a political act to make words matter.

[37] Walt Whitman, too, said something similar (see Hartley in Owen (ed.), 2008b: 140, 145).

[38] See Le Guin, 2008, on the 'social phenomenon' of *Harry Potter*.

[39] For a fuller history of the shift from non-continuous script to continuous, see Saenger, 2000.

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[40] However, the line between myth and fiction is only as clear as Kermode maintains when myth persists unexamined (i.e. when the myth is 'useful'). In fantasy fiction, myth is routinely examined, as it is generally presented as part of the fictional narrative. See also Eagleton, 2012: 194-199.

[41] Distinctions and divisions between fantasy and 'SF' meaning 'science fiction' and 'SF' meaning 'speculative fiction' are merely a manifestation of the perennial argument ('crosstalk') between literary modes and literary meaning. As we'll see, Kermode in 1967 was, perhaps unwittingly, prefiguring Roger Luckhurst (1994) and Fredric Jameson (2013), providing a nascent thesis for 'the rise of fantastic fiction' as a matter of 'dissidence between inherited forms and our own reality' (Kermode, 2000: 67, 128-130; see also Stephenson, 2012: 67-83; and James and Mendlesohn in Caserio and Hawes (ed.), 2012: 872-886).

[42] Orwell goes on to point out that Dickens' descriptions produced, through sound associations, 'exactly the pictures that those particular names would call up' (2014: n. pag.). We can see this clearly in Dahl, too: consider the language of the giant in *The BFG* (1982): 'snozzcumber', 'frobscottle', 'whizzpoppers' (Dahl, 2013).

[43] Byatt's tools of measurement are somewhat more measured than Bloom's: "Derivative narrative clichés work with children because they are comfortingly recognizable and immediately available to the child's own power of fantasizing." (Byatt, 2003) The success of the books amongst adult readers, likewise, is to her a form of returning to the 'blanket security' of childhood.

[44] George Orwell used the phrase 'Good Bad Books', taking the idea from Chesterton, 'the kind of book that has no literary pretensions but which remains readable when more serious productions have perished' (*Collected Essays*, 2014: n. pag.; see also Richard Hoggart, 1995: 102; and Neil Gaiman, 2013). This does not transliterate to 'Good Bad Theory' (see Jameson, 1997: 13-14); analysis and critique of popular culture, per se, neither implies nor masks shallow infatuations or unquestioning approval.

[45] See, argumentatively, Stuart Hall in Blundell et al., 2003: 2, 6.

[46] See also Q.D. Leavis, 1979: 130-131.

[47] The definitive work on this subject is Florence Goyet's *The Classic Short Story, 1870-1925: Theory of a Genre* (published using a Creative Commons license). True, one could read earlier bright sparks like Hawthorne, Poe, etc. but as Goyet argues, the second half of the 19th century is where we see the explosion: "The numbers speak for themselves: 3,000 copies in one or two years would be considered excellent sales for a collection of short stories, whereas 30,000 copies was normal for any periodical of the time. […Newspapers] of average circulation represented an infinitely larger audience than the readership of collections." (2014: 84, 86)

[48] They have a long and complex history – from chapbooks and broadsides to serialised fiction to penny fiction and dime novels to pulps – which has been better summarised by others. See, amongst others, James and Smith, 1998: xi-xiv; and R.D. Mullen and Mike Ashley's histories on pulpmags.org: Mullen, 2016, and Ashley, 2016.

[49] Airport novels were in fact preceded, hundreds of years earlier, by the now-little-remembered *Das Rollwagen büchlein* ('the cart / carriage book / booklet'), published by Jorg Wickram in 1555 (see Robertson, *A History of German Literature*, 1902: 192-193, 226). As we shall see in chapter three, Japanese cell phone novels, with their 'abbreviated chapters that are the ideal length to be read between shorter train stops', have now updated this practice (see also Dalziel, 1957: 79-83; Q.D. Leavis, 1979: 131-134).

[50] Sales channels operated in parallel. Dickens, for example, could appear as a good quality reprint, a cheap pirate reprint, in chapbook, in serialised print, in provincial newspaper reprint, in 'rail-road editions' and even as chapters printed on railway timetables (Johns, quoted in Bhaskar, 2013: 50; note: Bhaskar provides an interesting, if chaotic, approach to publishing history, notable in part for its use of 'ngrams', a technology discussed in chapter four of this thesis).

[51] Although romance was by no measure the dominant fiction in pulp, its future success as a genre nonetheless had the same historical tipping point – namely, the outbreak of World War II enforced restriction and rationing of paper and ink, leading to significant shifts in which genres subsequently flourished in which formats. See, more generally, Ashley, 1977: 15; Landrum, 1999: xvii-14; Shatzkin, 2011.

[52] The western is distinctly reminiscent of two romance traditions – the Arthurian legends (knights ride into the 20th century as cowboys) and the pastoral (put simply, a desire for a simpler life). One could argue, controversially, that it is a far more speculative genre than generally credited, in that its popularity was primarily post its historical setting (although, of course, one could say the same was true about the Arthurian romances). In a 2009 interview with *The A.V. Club*, Harold Bloom called Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985) 'the ultimate western': "It culminates all the aesthetic potential that Western fiction can have. I don't think that anyone can hope to improve on it, that it essentially closes out the tradition." (Pierce, 2009) Ironically, Bloom's bete noire Stephen King's fantasy work *The Dark Tower*, a 'cowboy Arthurian romance', may have nudged the door open again.

[53] See the complete quotation in context in Seward, 1811: 319; and a relevant critique in Clifford, 1941: 113, 122.

[54] Kermode tells a similar story about Wyndham Lewis, who once wrote of 'a famous contemporary novel that it was the cheap pastry of stuffy and sadic romance, with its sweet and viscous sentimentalism'. Kermode adds: "He was talking about Proust […]." (2000: 122)

[55] Or, as Jean Radford puts it in her introduction to *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*: "For though the text is a fixed verbal structure, its use or 'meaning' is constituted by socially and historically situated subjects." (Radford (ed.), 1986: 14)

[56] There are other lineages that precede the links of modern fantasy, of course. Michael Moorcock notes the specific influence of the Chivalric Romances on the Gothic / Romantic revival of the late 18th century (which would then touch Poe and later Dunsany, Lovecraft, Howard and so on), the rewriting of the fantastic elements of folk literature using the techniques of realism that the Romantic revival philosophically opposed: "The popularity of the Gothic rose as the impact of the Industrial Revolution increased, reflecting, symbolising and even 'explaining' the anxiety felt by those who witnessed radical changes in the world they knew. There are parallels today between the popularity of science fiction and major social changes which are now taking place." (1988: 29)

[57] *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* series combined are well over half a billion. The other half you could get to in a slightly larger handful of names: Piers Anthony, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Terry Brooks' *Shannara*, Cassandra Clare, the *Dragonlance* series, David Eddings, Raymond E. Feist's *Riftwar*, Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander*, Neil Gaiman, David Gemmell, Terry Goodkind's *Sword Of Truth*, Robin Hobb, Brian Jacques' *Redwall*, Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, Stephen King's *Dark Tower*, Katherine Kurtz, Tanith Lee, George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Anne McCaffrey's *Pern*, Michael Moorcock, Andre (Alice) Norton's novels, Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle*, the fictions of Tim Powers, Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Rick Riordan, R.A. Salvatore and all the books in the *Forgotten Realms* series, Jack Vance, Roger Zelazny… and so on; easily a billion fantasy works, even before you count authors more popularly published in languages other than English such as Liu Cixin, Cornelia Funke, Sergei Lukyanenko, Andrzej Sapkowski etc.

[58] Tolkien and Lewis were friends and even taught school together, and were prominent 'post-war' fantasists: *The Lord of the Rings* cycle (1954-1955) was published contiguously to the *Narnia* novels (one each year from 1950-1956), and both series explored, in depth, war and the responsibility of power; *Narnia*'s children are literally escaping the war – into their own conflict – but the childlike Hobbits of Tolkien are metaphorically analogous – the war comes to them in their Shire. (*Narnia* perhaps is to blame for the lazy charge of escapism levelled at fantasy fiction; the *Narnia* stories also juxtapose interestingly with *Harry Potter* in that it is the characters who grow up and become too old to believe in or participate in the fantasy adventure.) Lovecraft and Howard were friends also, but spawned different canons, one that wove fantasy with horror (Lovecraft) and the other fantasy with history (Howard; *Conan* – also published as *The People of the Black Circle* – rewrote historical elements fantastically, so they did not require authenticity beyond consistency, or rely on research over imagination). It is arguable that Tolkien and Lewis were more influenced by William Morris, and Lovecraft and Howard more by Dunsany, with the elements of chivalric / pastoral romance emphasised in the former. There are other – better, even, perhaps – writers of fantasy than these but their influence is undeniable; Stephen King without Lovecraft, for example, is hard to conceive (Knight, 1990: 5-13, 61, 97, 133-134; Lesny, 2012: 32-34, 43).

[59] See Moorcock, 1988: 185-187. This perception of fantasy – and of fiction in general – is still oppressively current (Salter, 2013) though it has traditionally had its cadre of critical defenders, too (see, for example, Maurice Blanchot's 'The Proper Use of Science Fiction' in Milner et al. (eds.), 2006: 375-383).

[60] As Donna Haraway somewhat blithely notes: "Science fiction is generically concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others and with the exploration of possible worlds […]." (Haraway, 1992: 300; see also Haraway, 1991)

[61] I am sensitive to C.B. Johnson's specific use of the term 'contemporary' here, from *Modernity Without A Project* (2014: 1-20), to delimit a space at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st: succeeding modernism, high modernism and postmodernism, 'the contemporary' signifies a problematic depoliticised timelessness pronounced in Western cultures during this period; a 'naming' which invokes claims to universality – endlessly adaptive, regenerative – while being encased in the defensive armour of the specific.

[62] Ultimately this oversimplification is ideological, locating a paradoxical history of rewriting that is our ongoing response to the linear / narrative 'ages of literature'. On this topic Brian Stock wrote pointedly: "The Renaissance invented the Middle Ages in order to define itself; the Enlightenment perpetuated them in order to admire itself; and the Romantics revived them in order to escape from themselves. In their widest ramifications 'the Middle Ages' thus constitute one of the most prevalent cultural myths of the modern world." (1996: 69) In short, we routinely mistake or misrepresent our 'subjective responses to the past' for the period to which we are responding. Stock avers, however: "The present age is no less ideological than previous ones; it may even be more so. Therefore one presumes that a similar danger persists. But in a time of reassessment, ideology is a necessary evil." (1996: 74; see also McKeon, 1988: 45)

[63] McLuhan relies on Febvre and Martin to explicate how, unlike with manuscript culture, "[it is] the efficacy of the printed word in first visualizing the vernacular and then creating that homogeneous mode of association which permits modern industry, markets, and the visual enjoyment of national status [that is, liberal nationalism]." (McLuhan, 1962: 223; see also 228-229; and see also *The Coming of the Book*, 1984: 270-274, and that book's conclusion 'Printing and Language', 319-332). This promotion by print of nationalism (and its 'alienation') is an argument circled by the late Benedict Anderson (2006: 136-137); for Anderson, 'print language invents nationalism' but nation states in the age of globalisation can also be 'imagined without linguistic communality'; arguably a paradoxical precursor or precondition for 'the new novel'. (See also the *London Review Bookshop* memorial podcast, Ali et al., 17/05/2016.)

[64] This current was momentarily reversed by Harlan Ellison's extraordinary 'Jeffty Is Five' (1977), in which a fantasy world is swallowed up and destroyed by our 'real' one; by and large it has moved in the other direction, that of Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* (1979), where both are preserved. See Ellison republished in Strahan and Brown (eds.), 2004; and Ende, 1997.

[65] Jameson wrote this in a valedictory essay about Philip K. Dick after his death in 1982, calling him 'the Shakespeare of Science Fiction' (another more general rendition appears in Jameson, 2005: 288-289). Of course, the truth is stranger etc.: when Jameson visited him eight years earlier, Dick, suffering from

paranoid hallucinations, denounced Jameson to the FBI, along with Stanislaw Lem (a copy of Dick's letter to the FBI can be found on Lem's website; Lem, 2016).

[66] Simon Reynolds's *Retromania* (2011: xii-xxxi). Reynolds argues that while retro has a specific meaning – "a self-conscious fetish for period stylisation […] expressed creatively through pastiche and citation" (ibid.: xii), it has permeated contemporary society and is significantly different from "earlier cults of antiquity like the Gothic Revival" (ibid.: xxx) in its obsession with pop culture as opposed to (rarefied) 'high culture', in its connection to the immediate past and its ability to access and recreate the texts of that past, not as an act of idealisation but simply to amuse the fleeting present with its own memories.

[67] So far, to be fair. Reynolds' list is hardly exhaustive, and the diffusion of terms is presumably indicative of the problem; Rushkoff proffers 'presentism' or 'present shock' (Rushkoff, 2013: 3), C.B. Johnson notes Terry Smith's 'contemporism' or 'remodernism' ('Better, perhaps,' Smith wonders, 'not to name it') and McKenzie Wark's response to Jameson: "Perhaps our diagnosis can move on from 'post' this and 'late' that to 'early' something else." (Johnson, 2014: 13, 18). To summarise Reynolds: whereas atemporality is an 'endless digital Now […] enabled by our increasingly efficient communal prosthetic memory' (roughly synonymous with the concepts of hyper-stasis and febrile sterility), terms like postproduction (and to a lesser extent super-hybridity and digimodernism) do reflect attempts at momentum, 'erasing the distinction between consuming and producing. Overproduction is no longer seen as a problem but as a cultural ecosystem.' (Reynolds, 2011: 397, 416-417).

[68] Jameson actively rejects this 'redefining' analysis of his work as 'disembodied culture critique or diagnosis of the spirit of the age' (but, presumably, so would many of the other theorists listed by Reynolds). In fact, Jameson begins his 'de-refining' text by pre-empting the limiting specificity of a terminology by introducing or 'staging' postmodernism as a more fluid category (soaking up contradictory or incongruent elements into an admitted / given construct), by comparison (Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 1997: 7-14).

[69] C.B. Johnson's use of 'the contemporary' could be placed alongside 'postmodernity' here, because of the clear way it indicts the ongoing problem. It would, however, be misleading to claim that Jameson's pursuit begins or ends with the publication of *Postmodernism* (or that the terms originate with him). In *The Political Unconscious* (originally published 1981; here 2002: xi), he writes about "the 'disaccumulative' moment of late monopoly or consumer or multinational capitalism", which in a 1982 interview with *Diacritics* he explains also as "a historical amnesia – a repression both of past and of imaginable future – far more intense than in any other social formation in human history" (1982: 74). In recent years (since 'The End of Temporality', collected in *The Ideologies of Theory*, 2008: 636-658), it has also been explained as "a shrinking of contemporary (bourgeois) experience such that we begin to live a perpetual present with a diminishing sense of temporal or indeed phenomenological continuities" (*The Antinomies of Realism*, 2013: 24). Terry Eagleton (somewhat foreshadowing chapter eight of this thesis) probably summed up Jameson's position best, in his *London Review of Books* essay on *Archaeologies of the Future*: "[Walter] Benjamin reminded us that not even the dead are safe from Fascism, which will simply erase them from the historical record; and one might equally claim that not even the future is safe from those who envisage it as no more than the present stretching all the way to infinity. Or, as one caustic commentator put it, the present plus more options." (Eagleton, 2006: 25)

[70] See also Eisenstein, 2011a: 167-169, 228-229; Arac, 2011: 6-7.

[71] This thesis has no interest in the theology, only in the metaphor. Rothman's 'tower of eBabel' describes the ongoing problem of reading and sharing ebooks, due to the incompatibility of formats (competing digital 'languages' and 'platforms') used by the different publishers of ebooks and producers of ereaders. In 'Genesis', of course, the people of the city speak a shared language until God, reportedly concerned that a common language gives birth to a common outlook or philosophy (represented in the otherwise pointless building of a tower to heaven) and that, therefore, 'nothing they do will be impossible for them', somewhat bizarrely chooses to 'confuse' them. What is digital technology, with its binary language, if not the common language of the internet, already making headway with the technology (as seen on search engines like Google) to automatically translate 'pages' from the 'national' languages in which they were conceived into the language of their reader?

[72] The history is convoluted and complex. One set of coordinates would be how, in 1958, ARPA (the Advanced Research Projects Agency; later DARPA) was formed by the US government, as part of the cold

war 'space race'; this was followed in 1969 by a functioning computer network between SRI (Stanford Research Institute) and UCLA (the ARPANET nodes) but it took another eight years before internet transmissions were shared between the nodes. Eventually the program of connecting localised-and-larger computer networks was taken up at CERN and, with the innovation of a hypertext ('http') interface, the internet spread worldwide. The other dominant / linear narrative is somewhat simpler: in 1980, IBM contracted with Microsoft (Bill Gates) to develop the operating system for their new home computer / 'microcomputer'; when personal computers became easy to connect to the network (the already-archaically entitled World Wide Web; a.k.a. 'www'; so, approximately in the mid-'90s, when Microsoft developed its Windows OS), we finally arrived at the internet (as we understand it and utilise it). See Segal, 1995; Waldrop, 2008; Miller, 2011; Bath and Schofield in Howsam (ed.), 2015: 181-187.

[73] Apart from Project Gutenberg there have been at least three other significant attempts to construct a library / archive model via the internet. (i) The Internet Public Library (founded in 1995, followed by a new derivation as ipl2, closed in 2015), functioned as a model for the last two decades of changes that the internet wrought on our understanding / use of libraries. (ii) The Internet Archive (founded 1996) is a massive storage facility for texts of all types, and is particularly important as it is our only public historical record / navigator of websites (of the internet, read in its ever-changing pages), via its tool 'The Wayback Machine'. It is fitting that the first copy, the 'backup', of this massive, growing documentation is in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (the new Library of Alexandria, opened in 2002). Their philosophy (at the BA) is as broad as it is brave: "preserve the heritage for future generations in digital form; and provide universal access to human knowledge". One way in which they do this is to provide print-on-demand technology, one of the more controversial developments in library practice. (iii) In 2003, the Wikimedia Foundation began two projects, exciting in this regard: Wikibooks (for the construction of 'crowdsourced' 'textbooks' and free / public annotations of copyrighted material) and Wikisource (providing original, non-copyrighted source materials and free / public translations). (IPL, 2016a, 2016b; Internet Archive, 1996, 2016a; ISIS, 2016; Wikimedia Foundation, 2016)

[74] Note: the following 'timelining' of Amazon, Apple and Google and their various ereaders comes from Arment, 2011; OSX Daily, 2013; Kozlowski, 2014b; Quinn, 2015; Google, 2016a, 2016b; Apple, 2016b.

[75] The history of the development of the tablet computer is fascinating insomuch as it was first conceived in the same era as the desktop personal computer but could not be realised until decades later. See Johnstone, 2003; Bort, 2013.

[76] Amazon had figured out, very early on, how to reproduce the experience of browsing in a bookstore, including links to the opening paragraphs of books, offering biographical material akin to the blurb or synopsis from a book's back cover and so on, but the model of Google Books, which allowed selections from the entire text, better recreated the sensation of browsing the digital bookstore.

[77] From the point of view of the future. See Borges, 2000: 419; McLuhan, 1962: 3, 130, 135, 141.

[78] Adams' books, beginning on an Earth roughly contemporary to their publication, employ a most beautifully-sustained metaphorical plot: when that world is destroyed by aliens (in the name of intergalactic progress) and then later is recreated, reconstructed, it reflects Adams' satirical outmatching of the popular realistic novel (the first Earth is destroyed then tediously rebuilt 'according to plan' – i.e. with deliberate and dull artifice). This is a metaphor that is reworked repeatedly, from average everyman / suddenly 'only man' Arthur Dent's house at the beginning of the series, to the Earth Mk. II built by the Magratheans, to the new Earth re-established by the dolphins in the fourth book and destroyed again by the Vogons in the fifth. Eoin Colfer's 'happy ending', where the characters are rescued in a posthumously written sixth book, *And Another Thing…* (2009), is therefore both Tolkienesque fairy-tale / fan-comforting wish-fulfilment and a mostly-worthy successor, as it ends with the Vogons again attempting to destroy the planet Dent ends up on. It should be noted that the books are so engaging, it is somehow surprising that it's also a metaphor for the limitations of realism against the powers of speculative fiction. See Adams, 1987, 1992; Colfer, 2009.

[79] Mary Shelley published an apocalyptic SF novel in 1826 titled *The Last Man*, in which humanity is extinguished by a terrible plague. The story is not about the death of books but it is exemplary insomuch as it produces much the same loneliness as throughout *Fahrenheit 451* – people without books or books without people (it ends with the solitary protagonist setting sail, accompanied only by his copies of Homer and Shakespeare). This line of thought solidifies in Jules Verne's *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (written in

1863; published in 1994), with its predictions of a soulless and repressive mechanised society, its hero a student of literature in a world where art holds only commercial value (books exist but nobody reads novels – attempting literacy without literature). E.M. Forster's story 'The Machine Stops' (1909) extends this over-reliance on technical manuals to just one: the Book of the Machine. The novella considers a future humanity closed off from the world and, largely, from each other (the theme of connection / disconnection that would colour so magnificently Forster's novel *Howards End* the following year) and posits that increasing reliance on technology, across thousands of years, would produce a religious-like worship and catastrophic relationship with it. Understandably, humanity's complicated reliance on / revulsion for technology is one of the core themes – tensions – of SF. John W. Campbell , the editor who shaped 'the Golden Age' of science fiction magazines (like *Astounding*, *Unknown Worlds*) overturned the conclusion of 'The Machine Stops' in his own short story 'Twilight' (1934), wherein – at the end of the long track – a machine is built to restore humanity's hope and imagination. Isaac Asimov, friend, protégé and extraordinary successor to Campbell, subsequently provided the simplest version of this anxiety, in 'The Fun They Had' (1951). In that short tale of a future 2157, all children are effectively home-schooled on a 'teacher' (part television, part robot, part ebook), leading the wondering children of the story to discuss the plausibility of paper books. One, Tommy, decides that people must have thrown books away after reading them because the words were always the same. See Asimov, 2016; Campbell, 2016; Forster, 2016; Shelley, 1826; Verne, 1996. Contemporary SF novels continue to wrestle with this conundrum: see Wolfe, 2001: 59-61; Simmons, 2011: 198-206; Ellis, 2013: 13, 17; Stephenson, 2015: 639-640.

[80] 'Speculative realism' is simply a gambit, here, an approximation and definitely not an answer. See Jameson in Taylor (ed.), 1980: 211-213; specifically: "To take an attitude of partisanship towards key struggles of the past does not mean either choosing sides, or seeking to harmonize irreconcilable differences. In such extinct yet still virulent intellectual conflicts, the fundamental contradiction is between history itself and the conceptual apparatus which, seeking to grasp its realities, only succeeds in reproducing their discord within itself in the form of an enigma for thought, an aporia. It is to this aporia that we must hold, which contains within its structure the crux of a history beyond which we have not yet passed. It cannot of course tell us what our conception of realism ought to be; yet its study makes it impossible to us not to feel the obligation to reinvent one."

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[81] Or, as Robert Coover, a hypertext pioneer, wrote in 'The End Of Books': "[The] very proliferation of books and other print-based media, so prevalent in this forest-harvesting, paper-wasting age, is held to be a sign of its feverish moribundity, the last futile gasp of a once vital form before it finally passes away forever […]. Which would mean of course that the novel, too, as we know it, has come to its end." (Coover, 1992; see also Coover, 1993, and LaFarge, 2011)

[82] The discernible shift in the United Nations Environment Programme *Yearbooks* and Food and Agriculture Organization *Global Forest Resources Assessments* tends to indicate that the focus has shifted (see UNEP, 2013: 58-59 on deforestation, 39 on e-waste; as opposed to UNEP, 1996: ch. 2, 3 & 6; FAO, 1996: ch. 1 & 3). Statistics on pollution etc. can be found in documents like the Environmental Paper Network's *The State of the Paper Industry* (2011) and the Rainforest Action Network's *A New Chapter For The Publishing Industry* (2014); the industry side of it, turning illiteracy and climate change into 'opportunity' (their words) can be found in the International Institute for Environment and Development's *A Changing Future For Paper* (IIED, 1996: 17, 19, 21), a summary of the report *Towards A Sustainable Paper Cycle*, and its sequel *Following Up On 'Towards A Sustainable Paper Cycle'* (2004: 6-7).

[83] Harlequin, 2005a, 2005b, 2008; Torstar, 2008, 2016; Cameron, 2010; Mills & Boon, 2016; Carina Press, 2016. While their digital strategies were immediately successful (income from digital manga was more than $10 million in 2009), they were not enough to combat losses in paperback sales (Greenfield, 2014f) although this is presumably temporary (for more Harlequin history, see also Wirtén, 1998; Faircloth, 2015).

[84] A good example of the limiting Western conception of the novel. As Florence Goyet explains, western culture caught up with Japan towards the end of the 19th century. Before then the word 'monogatari' was used, regardless of the work's length. As Japan's literature changed, the word 'shōsetsu', "made up of the two sino-Japanese characters for 'short' (shō) and 'story' or 'apologue' (setsu)" began to be used for 'novels' (Goyet, 2014: 192), then 'tanpen shōsetsu' ('brief' short story) developed to reflect a rise in

translation of western short stories; "[by] the second quarter of the twentieth century, this new word was widely used." (ibid.: 192) For more detail on 'light novels' and cell phone novels in Japan, see also Satomi Saito (315-327) and Kelly Hansen (301-314) in Hutchinson and Morton (eds.), 2016.

[85] Subscribing to books / serialised books / book platforms in Japan is arguably connected to their cultural practice of book rental, which is part of their complicated relationship with libraries. Although sales to public and university libraries combined is less than 2% of total publishing sales, it is nonetheless commonly believed that Japanese libraries 'purchase bestsellers to excess', causing authors to lose income. (JBPA, 2012: ch. 10; see also JBPA, 2014: ch. 2 & 10)

[86] Scribd is currently the largest (the outlier of Amazon's Kindle Library notwithstanding; see chapter six of this thesis). It coordinates with 900 publishers, including three of the Big Five, operates in approximately 200 countries, and offers access to 60 million documents, including a million books, comic books, audio books and sheet music selections; at last count these have been read for 17 million hours. (Scribd also charges to provide 'access' to what is freely available, anyway, viz. Creative Commons works; for more, see Hoffelder, 2013; Owen, 2013; DBW, 2015b; Alba, 2015; Scribd, 2016a, 2016b; Wischenbart, 2016: 176-180; Hoffelder, 2016.)

[87] See also Rice, 2010. Vosloo has moved on to work for UNESCO and as of 2016 Yoza's catalogue has been taken over and greatly expanded by the FunDza Literacy Trust (2012-ongoing; see Vosloo, 2016a, 2016b). For what it's worth, the mobile phone may yet become the global ereader of choice: Alexandra Alter notes that the percentage of US ebook readers who read primarily on their phones jumped 9% between 2013 and 2015 (from 6% to 15%), while the number who read on Kindle dropped 9%, from 30% to 21% (Alter, 2016). The number who read ebooks at least partly on their phones was much higher: 54% in 2014 compared to 24% in 2012 (Maloney, 2015).

[88] In the last few years (2012-2014), the Japanese government has supported attempts (the Kindigi Project etc.) to digitise tens of thousands of titles for the ePub 3.0 ebook market and stamp out 'illegal' scanning, copying and distribution practices. (JBPA, 2014: ch. 6 & 8)

[89] Traditional 'shared worlds' such as Robert Lynn Asprin's *Thieves' World* (different authors writing in anthologies and stand-alone spin-off novels; 1979-2012) or George R.R. Martin's *Wild Cards* series (superhero novels by different authors in a common setting; 1987-ongoing) should be distinguished from more sporadic attempts at the 'networked novel', like the experimental fiction of *A Million Penguins.* This 2007 collaborative effort between Penguin and De Montfort University to create a 'wiki-sourced' novel, essentially crowdsourcing the writing and editing of a novel in short sections, was not built to last and can now only be accessed by the Internet Archive's 'Wayback Machine' (Penguin and DMU, 2007).

[90] See Konrath, 2010, 2013b, 2013c, 2016; Crouch, 2016. What's most significant, apart from the staggeringly high volume of output, is that traditional distinctions between short story, novella, novel and series (and their various pricings, or price per 'instalment') that made sense in paper publishing are being eroded, a trend which will presumably have a distinct impact on future narratives. Both Konrath and the novelist Hugh Howey, who wrote the *Wool* series, are exemplary (of this discussion), heralding a return to serialisation with the digital advantages of constant revision and expansion, repackaging stories again and again, selling them as new each time.

[91] See Tveritina, 2011; Epstein, 2012; Amazon, 2016m; Metro 2033, 2016.

[92] See Baen Books, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Flint, 2016a, 2016b; 1632 Community, 2016. Baen's success in engaging their community of readers has produced some unusual sales channels: alongside their free 'taster' and legacy material, pay-to-download novels, and links to purchase paper versions are also numerous package subscriptions to access the 'Gazettes' and associated products, including 'Advance Reader Copies' – literally buying the book in the form of an unproofed manuscript before it is even edited or printed (Baen Books, 2016d; Flint, 2016c).

[93] Creative Commons is a non-profit organisation founded in 2001 by Lawrence Lessig (among others). Now international, it seeks to provide 'free licences and tools that copyright owners can use to allow others to share, reuse and remix their material, legally'. In 2012-2013 when Doctorow changed his licensing agreements, providing free downloads on his website and elsewhere (e.g. Wattpad), he likewise began

circulating a passionate screed stating that not only would he support all non-commercial derivative uses of his work, he also thought people should push harder to adopt their rights, under copyright law, to fair use, fair dealing, 'de minimis exemptions' and so on. He concluded: "Rights are like muscles. When you don't exercise them, they get flabby. Stop asking for stuff you can take without permission." As questions of copyright and creating a digital 'commons' are integral not only to the contemporary publishing process, but to the greater questions of literacy and human endeavour generally, they will be returned to in chapter six of this thesis (Doctorow, 2012; see also Doctorow, 2004, 2006, 2013b; Atkinson and Fitzgerald, 2014: 103-104, 125-126; Creative Commons, 2016; Creative Commons Australia, 2016).

[94] See Alderman and Atwood, 2012; Mancuso, 2016.

[95] Unfortunately, like *A Million Penguins*, the mongoliad.com website has been taken down and can only be accessed via the 'Wayback Machine'. Before they took it down (but after they published the content in both ebook, audiobook and paper versions), the site opened with: "This site and the material available through the iOS and Android apps is a record of the serialized experience, but is no longer considered to be the definitive text of *The Mongoliad*." (Subutai Corporation, 2013) The site now redirects to a broader project – *The Foreworld* – which then offers new participatory options including, through Kindle Worlds, a publishing platform for fan fiction. See also Subutai Corporation, 2016b.

[96] Fan fiction authors receive 35% of net revenue (of all sales), 20% for shorter works and most ebooks are priced $0.99-$3.99. Authors retain copyright on all original elements but Amazon has an exclusive licence for them, which it extends to the original copyright holder for further use, without further compensation. (Amazon, 2013b, 2016i, 2016j, 1016k, 2016l)

[97] Which is not to argue that illiteracy is not a problem – only that literacy, defined in those terms, is an inadequate way of understanding the cultural complexity of human communication, and that working for improvements in literacy outcomes, measured without recognition of their attendant goals, misses the point: "Contemporary societies formally proclaimed this view of education [as a fundamental human right] in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, following the catastrophic experience of World War II. Education is […] embedded in the process of enhancing each person's opportunities and freedoms to pursue the kind of life he or she values while respecting other people's rights. Education is, therefore, a key element for the fulfilment of the human condition." (UIS, 2009: 13)

[98] The figure of 250 million is specifically from 'estimates in the 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*' and includes 'children who have spent at least four years in school' but still could not meet the literacy standards. It is also arguably an underestimate, an example of what UNESCO refers to as the key need for 'access plus learning'; measurement of access is relatively simple, measurement of learning outcomes somewhat less so. In fact, all these figures are contentious, given under-reporting and other measurement concerns; some sources put the illiteracy rate as being upwards of 2 billion, or one in three of the world's people. (AAI and GCE, 2005: 7-9)

[99] As the OECD put it: "While better educational outcomes are a strong predictor of economic growth, wealth and spending on education alone are no guarantee for better educational outcomes. […An] image of a world divided neatly into rich and well-educated countries and poor and badly-educated countries is out of date." (OECD, *What Students Know and Can Do*, 2010a: 3)

[100] "They are unwilling, at any rate, to spend anywhere near so much on reading matter as they spend on several other recreations." (Orwell, 1966: 171) See also the findings of his hilarious essay of accounting, 'Books v. cigarettes' (1946). Orwell cannot find the actual sales figures ('though no doubt they exist') but estimates that pre-war, the average person bought approximately three books a year, totalling £1 or less. It is an even cheaper recreation, almost 'the cheapest' he notes, if you borrow them from a lending library or a public one. He concludes: "[If] my estimate is anywhere near right, it is not a proud record for a country which is nearly 100 per cent literate and where the ordinary man spends more on cigarettes than an Indian peasant has for his whole livelihood." (Orwell, 2014: n. pag.)

[101] See OLPC, 2016a, 2016b.

[102] To be fair, 'consent' and 'impact' are tremulous terms when it comes to the internet: most users have little idea of how it works (or how their usage is capitalised by corporate interests or monitored / censored

by governments) or how it's all going to turn out… so it's mildly patronising to try and protect Ethiopian villagers from practices / phenomena that the whole world is struggling to comprehend and participate in. Arguably, the context of the 'Nell experiment' is also provided by Stephenson's novel, which features a hacker organisation called CryptNet (something like Anonymous, years before they came to prominence) and imbues them with a philosophical / praxic credo: "[CryptNet believes] that information has an almost mystical power of free-flow and self-replication, as water seeks its own level or sparks fly upward […]." (1996: 384) This, for the organisation, provokes a material, utopian goal: "It is their view that one day, instead of Feeds terminating in matter compilers, we will have Seeds that, sown on the earth, will sprout up into houses, hamburgers, spaceships, and books – that the Seed will develop inevitably from the Feed, and that upon it will be founded a more highly evolved society." (ibid.) Even for an imaginary future, it appears a complex and controversial argument.

[103] After the field trial, the people behind 'Nell' all moved on from the OLPC; many of the contributors and collaborators are still at work, including Maryanne Wolf of Tufts University and Curious Learning, an organisation that is working to promote self-teaching through app / tablet feedback like Nell (see Wolf et al., 'Global Literacy and Socially Excluded Peoples', 2013; Rosen, 2012; Jabr, 2013). A similar project also went ahead in the US (Isaacson, 2014).

[104] It is, of course, not actually a return but instead what Walter Ong referred to as 'secondary orality', oral (and, therefore, aural) communication built on, consequent on, written and print literacies. For the original conception see Ong and Hartley, 2015: 3, 11, 133-134 (Ong) and 205-207, 210, 214-216 (Hartley).

[105] The 2012 Audio Publishers Association Annual Survey of Members notes the following statistics: 6 million more audiobooks were sold in 2012 than 2011 (a 13.5% increase in revenue), on the back of 13,255 new audiobooks published that year (almost double the figure from 2011), and the digital download format accounts for nearly two-thirds of units sold and half of all revenue. The 2014 Survey reported sales of $1.47 billion, up 13.5% over 2013. Unit sales were also up 19.5%, 'nearly five times the increase of the overall book trade industry'. Audible is the leading company in the global audiobook marketplace, the predominant supplier of audiobooks to iTunes and Amazon (founded in 1995, it was bought by Amazon in 2008). According to its website it publishes / stocks over 200,000 titles (compared to smaller players like Audiobooks.com with 100,000 titles or the DRM-free company Downpour, which claims 'tens of thousands'). (APA, 2013, 2015; Audible, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Audiobooks.com, 2016; Downpour, 2016)

[106] The notion that we are entering uncertain, diffident waters – reading new kinds of novels – is reflected in the various categories covered by the magazine *Digital Book World*'s Publishing Innovation Awards. Initially starting out with five categories (fiction, children's, comics, reference and non-fiction), the awards went on to include separate categories for ebooks, apps that incorporate books, self-published, 'digital first' and transmedia. As of 2015, transmedia, fixed format / enhanced and 'flowable' are all still award categories. (DBW, 2011, 2013, 2015a)

[107] Brewster Kahle also tells a wonderful story, not well known, about Aaron Swartz (he told it at the Internet Archive memorial for Swartz, after his death in 2013). In 2009, Google Books made over a million public domain books available in the ePub format; Swartz, in an attempt to make the public domain publicly accessible (i.e. not leaving it in the hands of a private company, however benevolent), figured out a way to mass download the files and upload them to the Internet Archive. For what it's worth, I'm reasonably certain I have relied on what he shared in this thesis. See Badger, 2009; Kahle, 2007; Kahle, 2011; Kahle, 2013; Swartz, 2010; also Atkinson and Fitzgerald, 2014: 129-132.

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[108] According to Eisenstein, Gradgrind is a factual 'by-product' of the printing press; 'characteristically representative' (2011a: 228-229; see also 2011b).

[109] See also *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (Statistics Canada and OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005: 15) where this commitment is upheld, and history from an organisational perspective recorded (ibid.: 277-278).

[110] Amazon and its competitors track, store and use consumer information, mostly via anonymised, aggregated data regarding which books are purchased and how they are read (last page read, bookmarks, highlights, notes and annotations, etc.). See Alter, 2012; Neary, 2013 (*NPR: Books* podcast, 31/01/2013); Greene, 2014; Neary, 2016.

[111] The lines are from 'At a Vacation Exercise in the College' written by the postgraduate John Milton and performed for students at a revel at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1631. See Milton, 2003: 31-32; Campbell and Corns, 2008.

[112] The process used by Google to determine the size of the task is complex but, put simply, it's ultimately a collation of library records focusing on 'tomes' – idealised bound volumes – and carefully excluding other forms of 'texts' (microforms, serials, audio recordings etc.; Taycher, 2010). James Crawford, Engineering Director of Google Books, noted in a blog post ('On the Future of Books', 14/10/2010) that they had 'scanned more than 15 million books from more than 100 countries in over 400 languages' since 2004. See alternatively Stokes, 2010.

[113] Coliloquy was acquired by a company called Vook in 2014, around the time that the latter also acquired short-form ebook publisher / product *Byliner*. Vook in 2015 relaunched as self-publishing platform Pronoun. In short, while digital technologies have obviously 'changed the way readers discover, purchase and consume books', Coliloquy's attempts to 'enable new forms of reading and writing' ('new revenue models', 'new forms of author-reader engagement') have not yet been fully realised. (Reid, 2016)

[114] Alter's original article was eventually amended as it implied ebook sales were outstripping print (see Greenfield, 2012a; Greenfield, 2012b). While the numbers were off, the premise of her article was not in question: the way we read, and by extension what and how we read, is changing, whether readers want it to or not: "It takes the average reader just seven hours to read the final book in Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy on the Kobo e-reader – about 57 pages an hour. Nearly 18,000 Kindle readers have highlighted the same line from the second book in the series: 'Because sometimes things happen to people and they're not equipped to deal with them.'" (Alter, 2012)

[115] The statistics are more impressive given in full: "We have just said, 'Literature secretes civilisation'. Do you doubt it? Open the first statistics you come across. Here is one fact we find under our hand: Toulon Penitentiary, 1862. Three thousand and ten prisoners. Of these three thousand and ten convicts, forty know a little more than to read and write, two hundred and eighty-seven know how to read and write, nine hundred and four read badly and write badly, seventeen hundred and seventy-nine can neither read nor write." (Hugo, 1911: 297)

[116] In his essay 'Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming' (*The Guardian*, 16/10 /2013), it is clear Gaiman has the same 'bad intel' as the OECD: "Lewis (2002) claims that some states in the United States use third-grade reading statistics to determine how many prison beds they will need in 10 years' time." (*Reading For Change: Performance And Engagement Across Countries: Results From PISA 2000*, 2002: 15).

[117] The idea that Departments of Correction are relying on literacy statistics to predict prison populations has been sufficiently debunked (they use far more convoluted algorithms; see Glod and Helderman, 2009; Graves, 2010). As Bill Graves writes in *The Oregonian* (23/03/2010), however, although they do not use the correlation for predictive purposes there nevertheless is one: "The myth probably has survived and circulated for more than a decade because it reflects the more fundamental truth that there is a powerful connection between school failure and crime." (See also UNESCO, 2016d: 108)

[118] There has been a shift in approach by the World Health Organization in recent decades that reflects the evolution from 'functional literacy' to 'interactive / critical' approaches; millions of lives have been saved, with millions more at stake. See Nutbeam, 1998, 2000; and the United Nations' 'Global Education First Initiative Brochure': GEFI, 2012: 11.

[119] The first three years of UNESCO (1945-1948) were revolutionary. In the draft proposal presented at the conference for the establishment of UNESCO in November 1945, it was written: "Dedicated to the proposition that the free and unrestricted education of the peoples of the world, and the free and unrestricted exchange among them of ideas and knowledge are essential to the advancement of human

welfare and to the preservation of security and peace […]." (UNESCO, 1945: 1). A year later, UNESCO's constitution came into force, and the following year at the second session general conference in Mexico they adopted the following resolution: "3.4.1. To encourage Member States to fulfil the obligations of establishing a minimum fundamental education for all their people in conformity with the spirit of Article 1 and 2 (b) of UNESCO's Constitution; among these obligations would be the establishment, within the shortest possible time, of universal free and compulsory primary education and the essential minimum education for adults […]." (UNESCO, 1948: 17). Finally, in December, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), including Article Twenty-Six: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." (UN, 2016a)

[120] As they well know; underwritten in *The Next Generation Of Literacy Statistics: Implementing the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)* (UIS, 2009: 19) as: "Obtaining statistical measurements is not a context-free or culture-free endeavour. Whatever is defined as and constitutes an observable phenomenon and the way that observation is conducted are the results of choices based upon values and perspectives."

[121] To the extent which the EFA goals first established in Jomtien in 1990 have not been met, it is worth keeping the historical context in mind. Their commitment was restated in the Dakar Framework for Action (EFA, Goal 6) in 2000 and echoed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, specifically Goal 2), established by the United Nations that same year. The struggle to reach these goals, or even form consensus on 'what those outcomes should be or how they should be measured' has led to a 'post-2015' paradigm where the focus has expanded from 'universal access to access plus learning'. (LMTF, *Toward Universal Learning: Recommendations from the Learning Metrics Task Force*, 2013c: 14; see also the United Nations 'Global Education First Initiative' brochure: GEFI, 2012)

[122] They are, however, vital in understanding the bigger picture; the summary document of the EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2013 / 2014: Teaching And Learning: Achieving Quality For All* (UNESCO, 2014a: 5, 31) states that in 2011, pre-primary education was only available to half of all young children globally, while 57 million children were not enrolled in primary education, and 69 million excluded from lower secondary. This was particularly significant in poor regions and conflict-affected countries, and reflected substantial gender disparity. However, even for children with at least four years in school, around 250 million were still not learning basic skills, at an annual cost of approximately US$129 billion, or 10% of global spending on primary education.

[123] 'Youth' in these statistics reflects people 15-24 years old; 'adult' is inclusive, 15 and up. The language is specific, too: many of the surveys measure partial / progressing / incomplete literacy as well, not just the literate / illiterate binary – partial, however, counts as illiterate for the statistics.

[124] The UIS also reports literacy statistics per census decade (e.g. 2005 to 2014, 1995 to 2004, 1985 to 1994) because "censuses and surveys are not carried out annually, and because literacy rates change more slowly over time than indicators like school enrolment rates […]. Within each decade, the most recent available literacy rate for a country is used for the reporting of national data and the calculation of regional averages." (UIS, 2013a: 23; see also Table 14 of the GED 2012 and Table 2 of the 2013 'Adult and Youth Literacy' report: UIS, 2012a, 2013a)

[125] LAMP is a small survey, operating in only 12 countries (compared to, say, the OECD's PISA or PIAAC; LMTF, 2013b: 89, and see below), but it robustly addresses two key weaknesses found in prior literacy data collection ('Adult and Youth Literacy' report; UIS, 2013a: 14, 22, 24): errors that arise from self-reporting and errors that arise from constructing a literate / illiterate dichotomy. LAMP administer the literacy tests themselves but surveys are also calibrated to respond to the culturally complex way literacies work in different communities. This has been particularly useful in making the needs of at-risk populations, such as refugees, more statistically visible (LAMP report, UIS, 2009: 15, 2011).

[126] LIFE was a concerted attempt to meet EFA goals during the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), with particular focus on adult literacy and out-of-school children in 35 target countries (comprising 85% of the world's non-literate population). (UNESCO, 2016c)

[127] The 2012 EFA GMR scenario suggested that (1) approximately 120 million children either never made it to school or dropped out before their fourth year, (2) 250 million primary school-age children, including those who had completed four years of schooling, were still not able to read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards, and (3) 200 million adolescents, including those who had completed secondary school, did not have the skills they needed for life and employment. By 2014, the LMTF had produced three reports responding to these problems, and a summary with seven recommendations (which, by 2015, were being implemented in 15 countries), incorporating the aforementioned 'access plus learning' (which requires increased, specific measurements), learning competencies across seven domains (including 'social and emotional learning' and learning 'learning approaches') and more general points, such as equity, the importance of assessment, what indicators were important etc. See LMTF, 2013a: 52, which raises the urgent question of consensus between NGOs (like the Global Campaign for Education, the Right to Education Project, the Global Partnership for Education and Save the Children); LMTF, 2013b: especially 84-90 on targets and measurements; LMTF, 2013c; and LMTF, 2014: especially 9-13.

[128] The UIS is a part of UNESCO which is a part of the UN; and while the UN may be a political animal, its constitutive bodies are, by degree, insulated from its ferocity. That said, Secretary-General Moon's decision to pursue this initiative in 2012, before the EFA goals were 'officially' unrealised, had an unmistakably political scent to it. In the years that followed, the agenda being set became increasingly 'post-2015'; as of 2016, the EFI is contributing to a 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, with seventeen Sustainable Development Goals replacing the eight Millennium Development Goals, SDG#4 updating MDG#2. (See GEFI, 2016b, 2016c)

[129] The EFI did not rely on goodwill to sell itself; see the 'Global Education First Initiative' brochure (GEFI, 2012: 3, 11) and the EFI's 'investment case for education': "Education is not simply a moral imperative – it is the smart choice. Every dollar invested generates US$10 to US$15 in returns"; "Getting all children into basic education, while raising learning standards, could boost growth by 2% annually in low-income countries"; "Some countries lose more than US$ 1 billion a year by failing to educate girls to the same level as boys"; and, falling somewhere in between – "Some 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty – reducing the global rate by 12% – if all students in low-income countries acquired basic reading skills." It should also be noted that UNESCO and GEMS Education, in support of the EFI, partnered for the Global Education and Skills Forum (March, 2014) in an attempt to connect / yoke private enterprise to furthering long-term literacy goals; and that since July, 2015, the third International Financing for Development Conference has shaped the direction moving towards 2030. For more, see UNESCO, 2014c; and the UN's *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Outcome Document)* and its Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development *AAAA: Monitoring commitments and actions (Inaugural Report 2016)* (UN, 2015, 2016b).

[130] The OECD mostly works on data collection, discussion and implementation issues, so unlike the other major international economic organisations (the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization; the former two, controversial offshoots of the UN) its work is relevant to this thesis (or, to explain it from their point of view – to underpin 'innovation and growth', we need to 'ensure that people of all ages can develop the skills to work productively and satisfyingly in the jobs of tomorrow'; OECD, 2011c: 9).

[131] Originally phase / round one was supposed to be 2008-2013, with a second round 2012-2016 (complemented by a second cycle of rounds 2018-2023). Data collection for round one (24 countries) took place in 2011-2012, and the second round (9 countries) is on schedule but a third round has now been added (at least five more countries), which should run from 2016-2019. (Background: OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000; OECD, 2013a, 2013b, 2016)

[132] To the best of my knowledge (and excluding the position of the UN; see below), and even though the IEA's studies precede the OECD's (the IEA were aware of a continuum, they were measuring a continuum, however whether they understood / accepted it as a necessary key value of literacy is an arguable proposition; the OECD's evolving 'definition' of literacy from 1992 onwards has been extensively documented: OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005: 280; OECD 2010a: 37, 2013a: 4, etc.).

[133] See OECD, 2013c: 2-12.

[134] On financial literacy, see OECD, 2013c; on health literacy, in which the OECD has played an under-recognised, supporting role, see for example the uses of IALS and ALLS: OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000: xv, 77; OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005: 250; ABS, 2008: 4.

[135] In 2002-2003, the OECD began a project in financial literacy, which in 2003-2004 was endorsed by the organisation as a more complete 'programme of work' for both 'developed' and 'developing' nations. This spread through member countries (and more broadly) and was taken up by an array of academic and economic institutions and government bodies and developed and implemented at a national level as policy (of particular note is its presence in the 'austerity politics' of the UK and other victims of the global financial crisis). See also Hecklinger, 2006: 1-2; OECD, 2011a; 2013d: 4; 2014a: 4.

[136] According to the OECD, "[the] surveys have complementary goals: PISA seeks to identify ways in which students can learn better, teachers can teach better, and schools can operate more effectively; the Survey of Adult Skills focuses on how adults develop their skills, how they use those skills, and what benefits they gain from using them." (*Skilled for Life? Key Findings From The Survey Of Adult Skills*; OECD, 2013a: 4) Note: in their findings from PISA 2000 (*Reading For Change: Performance And Engagement Across Countries: Results From PISA 2000;* OECD, 2002: 13-14), they explicitly compare themselves with the IEA studies (discussed below): "PISA focuses on assessing reading literacy in the context of everyday situations [as needed by 15-year-olds, compared to the curriculum and instructional practices more necessary for 9-year-olds.]"; they also have plans for further, future synergy (OECD, 2015: 6-8).

[137] It is arguably not their intended purpose, which is to provide ways of directing and improving population-specific policies related to education and skills-training in a broader context of agreed-upon cultural values; useful, specifically, for revealing and addressing inequality within populations. However, many countries seem to only care about their global 'rank'. (Fuhrmann and Beckmann-Dierkes, 2011; Kennedy, 2013; Stewart, 2013)

[138] This is what the OECD refers to in PISA as Level 2 (OECD, 2010a: 150, 158). Further studies showed that students who scored below this level faced 'a disproportionately higher risk of poor post-secondary participation or low labour-market outcomes'. (OECD, 2014a: 191, 195; 2013e: 35; 2010a: 52) Note: PISA 2009 was the last survey that focused primarily on reading so while the 2012 reading statistics are obviously more current they have to be considered in this context.

[139] The two levels 'below' the baseline appear to have evolved over time, revealing a more complete picture of 'results' for cultures / economies: "The fact that just one in a hundred students across OECD countries cannot perform tasks at level 1b demonstrates that the PISA reading scale is now able to describe accurately the performance of almost all students." (OECD, 2010a: 53)

[140] While there is overwhelming OECD evidence that girls outperform boys in reading assessments at age 15 (and earlier too, if you compare it with IEA studies; IEA and Elley: 1992: 56-59), differences between reading rates and abilities in diverse cultures points to gendered cultural assumptions and influences driving that difference; as with concerns raised about girls and mathematics, gender performativity remains the significant element. That said, 24% of boys in OECD countries currently do not attain the baseline proficiency compared to 12% of girls; in 14 of those countries, more than 50% of boys do not attain the baseline. (OECD, 2014a: 199, 201)

[141] Across OECD countries 15.5% of adults score at or below Level 1; this varies significantly between countries from only 1 in 20 people in Japan to more than 1 in 4 people in Italy and Spain. (OECD, 2013e: 67)

[142] There is a broadly consistent philosophical argument worth mentioning here (beyond criticisms of questionable premises and the widespread misuses of PISA's ranking system – and PIAAC's, presumably): that these measurements cannot be separated from the tools used to measure them; that you can't measure ability independently of the specific questions students are asked to answer. (See Goldstein, 2004; Kreiner, 2011; Stewart, 2013; Morrison 2013; Morrison, 2014; Bagshaw, 2016)

[143] The same problem; not necessarily requiring the same solution. See Abadzi, 2013a; 2013b.

[144] There are other – arguably equally useful (but not for this thesis) – regional studies worth considering: in particular, SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality), which is

in its fourth rendition (i – 1995-1999, ii – 2000-2004, iii – 2006-2011, iv – 2012-2014), and the European Union / Eurostat 'Adult Education Survey' (2007, 2011-2012; next survey is in 2016-2017).

[145] Technically their first pilot study (supported and sponsored by UNESCO) was in 1960, but PIRLS is a more recent derivation. See *Educational Achievements of Thirteen-Year-Olds in Twelve Countries* (UNESCO Institute for Education: 1962: 5-8).

[146] Some students, from countries / cultures which start school earlier, were in year five. Some tested students (measured separately) were also in year six; as part of an attempt to improve the tools of measurement, older students in some countries were included as it was estimated it would have been too difficult to estimate the reading achievement of the younger students. Furthermore, some countries opted for a version called 'prePIRLS', better suited to measuring their population (which will be updated in PIRLS 2016 with a category called PIRLS Literacy). Like PISA (and, in theory, all of these statistical studies), PIRLS is continually attempting to refine itself; whether they're using the right tool, or the right tool correctly, or providing measurements that can be in any sense separated from the tools used to measure them, is unclear (see IEA, 2015: 4, 6, 56; IEA, 2012: 36-37, 44).

[147] Approximately half the PIRLS countries had more than 95% percent of their students reaching the Low International Benchmark. 32 countries had more than 90% reach the benchmark, 3 more achieved between 80-90%, and only 10 countries ranked below that. This compares to 94% above median in 2006; the 2001 study used a different measurement, based on 25% percentiles – obviously a far higher number fell below that particular ranking. (See IEA, 2012: 66-69; 2007: 68-69; 2003: 47-48)

[148] This first global study contains a fascinating overview of literacy data to date; beginning with the figures from the estimative study by the US Bureau of Education in 1929: "Abel and Bond presented a world-wide survey of illiteracy based on census and other types of data up to the 1920's. They came to the conclusion that there were at that time in the world about 850 million illiterates 10 years of age and over, or 62 per cent of the world's population at that age level". (UNESCO, 1957: 10) The UNESCO study also presented a wide array of historical findings; for example, using the model of France (1832-1946), they compared the evolution of statistics from the basic (marriage registry) to potentially more complex (enlistment in military records) and finally by census of population (ibid.: 21-23). They also described studies which may have impacted on the length of schooling or 'age of testing' still experienced today (a 1922 study of US voter literacy and a 1948 Filipino study which suggested seven years: ibid.: 23-24), and studies that measured school students against adults (a UK government study in 1948 measured members of the armed forces, a post-war population the government was aiming to help, against children; the 'reading ages' that they were tested against included the age of 7+, described as 'semi-literate', followed by 9+, referred to as 'backward'; ibid.: 25).

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[149] Although national studies, surveys and polls are much smaller, and harder to comparatively interrelate, they nonetheless shed some light on contemporary problems and concerns. A 2015 report on Canada found that 80% of respondents read books, 90% of those for leisure. About half read ebooks. (EKOS, 2015: 3, 14). These numbers would generally be considered somewhat high for the English-speaking world (see also Environics, 2013). In the UK, roughly two-thirds of adults read for pleasure: 64% in 2014 / 2015 down from 66.6% in 2013 / 2014, steady since data collection began in 2009 (DCMS, 2015a: 6; DCMS, 2015c: 7); reading and writing activities were slightly less popular amongst younger people: 59.3% of 11-15-year-olds surveyed participated in such activities 'outside of school' (DCMS, 2015b:18). This is consistent with Australian data from PISA 2009 (15-year-olds) which recorded 'reading for enjoyment' at 63%; ABS data also revealed that the proportion of children (5-14) reading for leisure had wavered from 75% in 2003 to 71% in 2012, although their longitudinal study (LSAC, 10-11-year-olds surveyed in 2010-2011) found that 87% enjoyed or sometimes enjoyed reading (comparable to Australian PIRLS results from 8-10-year-olds in 2011: 82% liked or somewhat liked reading (ACA, 2014: 7-9; see also ABS, 2012: 4, 14; ACA, 2013). New Zealand had a much lower number, when considering children who 'read books for fun': 55% in 2014, relatively steady since 2008 (NZAC, 2014: 74). A 2016 study in the US found that 65% of adults had 'read a printed book in the past year' (steady from 2012), 28% had read an ebook and 14% listened to an audiobook (a relatively steady 73% across formats: other studies found 79% across all formats in 2011, 71% in print; Victor, 2016; Basu, 2015). These studies show a sharp distinction across the decades: 88% in 1978, 83% in

2005 and so on (Weissmann, 2014) although the numbers – broken down – seem hardly conclusive (Rainie et al., 2012: 19). An NEA report in 2012 also found a much lower number when 'voluntary reading' was specified: only 58% of adults surveyed (percentage of adults who had read at least one work of literature in the preceding year had slipped from 56.4% in 1982 to 47% in 2012; 16% had done so on a handheld or mobile device; NEA, 2013: 9, 24, 31; see also AP, 2007). As for the younger generation, a survey for the publisher Scholastic reported a drop in reading for pleasure amongst American children: 51% in 2014 down from 60% in 2010 (Flood, 2015), whereas another report by Common Sense Media found that the number of 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds who said they 'never or hardly ever' read for pleasure had gone up significantly over the last 30 years: 8% up to 22% for 13-year-olds and 9% up to 27% for 17-year-olds; in fact, 45% of 17-year-olds in 2014 said 'they read by choice only once or twice a year' (Charlotte Alter, 2014). In the UK, a Booktrust survey reported that 72% of respondents either enjoyed reading books 'very much' or 'quite a lot'; 50% read books at least every week, although 18% never read physical books and 71% never read ebooks (14% did not read any format; Gleed, 2013: 2, 8, 14). A separate Booktrust study found that 51% of parents reported that their children (0-8 years) 'read alone for pleasure' every day or almost every day (Kucirkova and Littleton, 2016: 6, 25-28). Gallup Polls in Australia have recorded a slight decline in book reading amongst adults (14+) since 2004 but 'reading enjoyment' was steady amongst children (2010-2015) at approximately 75% (Roy Morgan, 2014; Roy Morgan, 2016). See also Peter Moore, 2013; Flood, 2013; Dahlgreen, 2014; DeSilver, 2014; LaFrance, 2014; Flood, 2014a; Schaub, 2015; Rainie and Perrin, 2015; Flood, 2016; Sin, 2016; Perrin, 2016).

[150] This was not their first study; in 1970-1971 (following earlier maths and science studies) the IEA ran a *Six Subject Survey*, including reading comprehension (in 14 countries) and a literature component (in 9 countries). It is a fascinating study (comparatively speaking: 'Indicate the extent you have to recite passages of literature from memory') but it's simpler if we just compare its 'tools' – in the possible answers to the question 'Indicate about how many hours you spent reading just for your own pleasure during the last week.', the upper-most answer was 'more than 15'. (IEA and Bloom, 1969a, 1969b)

[151] This line of inquiry has disappeared in the era of the internet: in the 1991 study this is a factor, in 2001 it is measured as 'time watching television or videos on a normal school day' (IEA, 2003: 275) and by 2006 it is no longer measured…

[152] Self-assessment arguably provides unreliable results; while achievement and attitude can be measured on a predetermined scale, self-assessment often leads to what researchers call the 'compliance effect' or 'social desirability factor', i.e. lying (IEA and Elley, 1992: 79-81). This is a significant issue when considering smaller surveys of reading (as referenced above), particularly those that do not measure ability in any sense, only self-reported practices. It is also arguable that this has shaped the contemporary international literacy studies, leading to their 'overemphasis' on 'comparing abilities'. See also OECD, 2010b: 63.

[153] Measurable declines in 2006 are attributed to the possible effect of the internet; measured in 2001 (only), 57% of students had access to a computer whereas 86% had access to 'books of their own'.

[154] Both studies measured student and parent attitudes towards reading, measuring scaled responses to statements such as (for parents): 'I read only if I have to', 'I like talking about books with other people', 'I like to spend my spare time reading', 'I read only if I need information' and 'reading is an important activity in my home', and (for students): (again) 'I read only if I have to' and 'I like talking about books with other people' but also 'I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present', 'I think reading is boring' and 'I enjoy reading'. Although the questions reveal social attitudes towards reading / the uses of reading, the fact that responses were averaged to provide an index means that the result is less useful (from the point of view of this thesis). What is more significant (as discussed in the main text) is that the 2009 PISA ended up adopting / emulating PIRLS for its parent questionnaire (I'm going to sum the ranges to make them clearer but it is pretty unequivocal): Q6(a) "Reading is one of my favourite hobbies" – agree 72.84%, disagree 25.28%; (b) "I feel happy if I receive a book as a present" – agree 82.65% , 15.24% disagree; (c) "For me, reading is a waste of time" – agree 4.03%, disagree 93.18%; (d) "I enjoy going to a bookstore or a library" = 73.10% agree, 24.48% disagree. (See IEA, 2003: 120, 258; IEA, 2007: 127, 139; OECD, 2008; all PISA data can be accessed at https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/ – unless otherwise specifically indicated, all PISA statistics came from this source)

[155] This also, obviously, reflects the broader scope of nations included, from Norway (42% 'many' and 0% 'few') and Australia (41% 'many', 0% 'few') to Morocco (1% 'many', 53% 'few'); this division was repeated

with the sixth-grade participants studied (Kuwait, Botswana, Morocco, Honduras; 'developing' countries): 1-3% students with 'many resources' available and (with the exception of Kuwait) most typically had 'few' (42%-56%); in the pre-PIRLS category (South Africa, Colombia, Botswana) 1-2% with 'many' and 33-44% with 'few'. (IEA, 2012: 112-113)

[156] In pre-PIRLS (2011), 6-16% had more than 100 books and 9-17% more than 25 children's books (12-20% had their own room and the internet), and in the sixth grade participants, 6-16% had more than 100 books and 11-14% more than 25 children's books (11-17% own room and internet, except Kuwait which had 56%). (Note: in 2001 PIRLS, as noted, parents reported higher than students by an international average of 5%; in 2011, only students reported.) (IEA, 2003: 108-109; IEA, 2012: 114-115)

[157] If you only sometimes, as a parent, read aloud signs and labels, wrote letters or words, and talked to your children about things done and read, and never or almost never did any other of the five literacy activities (including reading books to your children), you were counted as 'never or almost never'; anything beyond that counts as 'sometimes', explaining the 60% international average (in 2001, the comparative 'medium' EHLA was 35%; for reference, 'often' in 2011 meant 'often' doing five of the activities and 'sometimes' doing the other four). (IEA, 2003: 97; IEA, 2012: 126)

[158] Perhaps this can be accounted for by the adjacent set of results, declaring an international average of 42% of students receiving more than three years of pre-primary education and a further 47% receiving between one and three years; PISA 2009 also considered this question in their parent questionnaire (Q2 "Did your child participate in <child care> before [school]?" 44.93% said yes, 54.02% said no). (IEA, 2012: 128; see also OECD, 2008)

[159] The 2009 PISA list is identical to 2001 PIRLS. Under Q3(f): "Talk about what you had read": never or hardly ever, 13.83%; once or twice a month, 20.05%; once or twice a week, 34.02%; every day or almost every day, 29.78%. (See also OECD, 2008)

[160] A sixth question was added for the components that gauged student attitudes towards reading (noted above): 'I would like to have more time for reading'; in any event, if students agreed 'a lot' with three of the statements and 'a little' with the other three, then, if they read material they chose for themselves, every day or almost every day for fun, they were considered to 'like reading' (as noted, 28%). However, if they only read for fun (and/or things they chose) once or twice a month or less (and disagreed with some of the statements), they were considered to 'not like reading' (15%); i.e. if you (as a student) read something you chose, for fun, more than once a fortnight (and agreed 'only a little' that you like talking about what you read, would be happy to get a book as a present and would like more time for reading) then you are categorised as 'somewhat liking reading' (57%); which is arguably a mildly distorted 'reading' of reading. (IEA, 2012: 204-205)

[161] Again, the weighting may have obscured the results: "Students 'agreeing a lot' with three of the statements and 'agreeing a little' with the other three, on average, were considered to be Motivated readers. In comparison, students Not Motivated to read 'disagreed a little' with three of the statements and 'agreed a little' with the other three, on average." (IEA, 2012: 210) Which is to say if you (as a student) agreed 'a lot' that you 'needed to read well for the future', which was 'important' and something your parents would 'like' (extrinsic), you only had to agree 'a little' that you liked to read 'things that made you think' or taught you 'a lot' or helped you 'imagine other worlds' (intrinsic). The resulting 74% 'motivated' was not that impressive.

[162] For a critique of global competition, standardisation and 'test-based accountability' in education, see Sahlberg, 2012.

[163] PISA 2000 is difficult to work with because almost none of the raw data is available in the publications and reports; in all but one case I had to download the questionnaire (see OECD, 2000) then create spreadsheet tables and extract the 'raw' OECD average data (their cluster analysis was ridiculously unhelpful). As to their questions, the OECD at the time quite obviously had a very traditional sense of media (Q19(c) "In general, how often do your parents listen to classical music with you?"; compared to their understanding of the relevance of the internet: OECD, 2002: 122), which was disrupted by the students' unexpected priorities. See also OECD, 2001, 2002, 2003. Note: in general, the OECD and IEA rely on 'country averages', that is, the 'mean data for all countries, where each country contributes equally to the average';

although it could be argued that literacy statistics where each country contributes in accurate proportion to the actual number of respondents would equally be helpful when talking about global experiences of cultural change.

[164] In fairness, dishwashers are a usefully predictive 'social status item'. See Q21(a) "In your home, do you have a dishwasher?" (OECD averages – 57.07% said yes, 41.46% said no; PISA 2009 reports: 68.75% yes / 30.10% no).

[165] Parents may have responded differently; in PISA 2009, the revamped question for parents produced the following (higher) response: "Discuss books, films or television programmes" – never or hardly ever, 5.87%; once or twice a month, 18.07%; once or twice a week, 41.88%; every day or every other day, 32.59%. They did admit they would never or hardly ever 'go to a bookstore or library with their child' (49.56%, maybe once a twice a month 40.35%) but they would talk with their child about what they were reading on their own every day or every other day (10.79%), once or twice a week (28.71%), once or twice a month (36.42%), never or hardly ever (22.31%).

[166] Consider also the 2001-2006 PIRLS 'reading for fun' (40% every day or almost every day, 28-29% once or twice a week, 30-32% twice a month or less), and reading 'novels' statistics (32% every day or almost every day, 31% once or twice a week, 18% once or twice a month and 19% never or almost never); PISA 2000's once a month or less (69.72%), several times a month (16.2%) and several times a week (11.17%) suggests a big drop-off from childhood to adolescence (where reading becomes a form of 'work'; culturally variable, of course) and, arguably, a sizable return in adulthood (45-47% every day, 34% once or twice a week, 18-21% twice a month or less; PIRLS adults).

[167] Roughly the same percentage of students that had classic literature at home also had more than 50 books. In 2009, 8.16% of students had more than 500 books (2000 data unavailable).

[168] PISA 2000 asked: Q37 "How many books are there in your home? There are usually about <40 books per metre> of shelving. Do not include magazines." (<> = terms which need to be culturally defined; OECD, 2001: 143-144). This was repeated in 2009: 0-10 books = 12.06%, 11-25 books = 15.69%, 26-100 books = 30.69%, 101-200 books = 18.06%, 201-500 books = 14.17%; this figure compares appreciably with the number from PIRLS 2001: 15%-20% having above 200 books (of course, PIRLS 2011 – 27% 'more than a hundred', a bit of a drop from 36.27%).

[169] PISA 2009 reconfirmed these findings: Q39 "How often do you visit a library for the following activities? (a) Borrow books to read for pleasure": 47.02% Never / 27.96% A few times a year / 12.97% About once a month / 8.65% Several times a month / 2.60% Several times a week ; (e) "Read books for fun": 54.40% Never / 19.10% A few times a year / 10.65% About once a month / 9.00% Several times a month / 5.58% Several times a week ; (g) "Use the Internet": 47.66% Never / 12.12% A few times a year / 7.25% About once a month / 9.17% Several times a month / 22.45% Several times a week; again, the most interesting statistic pointing towards a trend is the one in five who use the library to read things on the internet.

[170] Arguably this is analogous to the 'paradox' above: more students are motivated to read than enjoy reading; here, some students – about 5% – are apparently almost equally likely to choose to read fiction at least a few times a year (as opposed to never or almost never) even if they 'do not read for enjoyment' (the averages for never / rarely are almost equal; the figure for 'don't read' is higher; therefore some students who don't read for pleasure, read anyway, however rarely).

[171] So, these are akin to the IEA index questions (2001 / 2006; discussed above): 'I read only if I have to', 'I like talking about books with other people', 'I like to spend my spare time reading', 'I read only if I need information', 'reading is an important activity in my home', 'I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present', 'I think reading is boring' and 'I enjoy reading'. How different, really, is 34% of adolescents (PISA 2000) having reading as a favourite hobby and wanting to talk about it and 28% of children 'liking reading' (PIRLS 2011) – isn't this just more evidence of the argument that roughly a third of children / adolescents / people like reading, a third don't like reading ('hard to finish' / 'only if I have to'), and the last third read but don't really care? Isn't that what we'd expect to see? Of most obvious concern is the 21-23% who can't sit still or see it as a waste of time – which arguably goes beyond preference and implies / highlights learning difficulties, and patterns of illiteracy…

[172] Perhaps it's an obscure reference to Scout from *To Kill A Mockingbird*: "Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing." (Lee, 1974: 24) Anyway, the quote goes on: "28% of students also indicate that they become totally absorbed when reading, and another 29% […] agree somewhat with this statement." This analysis was, in fact, based on questions from the CCC (Cross-Curricular Competencies) Questionnaire, not the main student questionnaire. Tellingly, the full response to Q2(31) ("How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Because reading is fun, I wouldn't want to give it up"), if you sum the intermediate responses ('somewhat agree / disagree'), is practically the same: 46.62% disagree, 48.59% agree. The CCC questionnaire also asked two other questions more obviously related to 'reading literacy' – Q2(41) "I read in my spare time." (46.01% disagree, 48.79% agree; summed) and Q2(45) "When I read, I sometimes get totally absorbed." (38.29% disagree, 56.50% agree; summed); in all cases, the vague language appears to have resulted in a wash (idiomatically speaking). (OECD, 2001: 100)

[173] "Around 470 000 students completed the assessment in 2009, representing about 26 million 15-year-olds in the schools of the 65 participating countries and economies. Some 50 000 students took part in a second round of this assessment in 2010, representing about 2 million 15-year-olds from 10 additional partner countries and economies." (OECD, 2010b: 20)

[174] Access is vital. See OECD, 2010b: 91.

[175] Cultural distinctions are not insignificant; e.g. students in Japan read more comic books than students elsewhere (OECD, 2010b: 70).

[176] Parents also responded: Q7 'Which of the following are available to your child in your home?': Books of their own (88.69%), Internet connection (87.16%), Email (83.6%), Chat online (77.68%), Daily Newspaper (50.57%), Journal or magazine subscription (40.85%).

[177] This continues to be the argument, though: "The bottom line: Fewer students today are reading for pleasure, even though daily reading for pleasure is associated with better performance in school and with adult reading proficiency. The challenge for parents and educators is to instill a sense of pleasure in reading by providing reading materials that students find interesting and relevant." (OECD, 2011b: 4) While 'enjoyment' might have some culturally-variable elements (socially-induced, media-specific etc.), the OECD argues that in more than two-thirds of countries surveyed, 'reading for enjoyment' has far more impact on 'reading performance' than simply 'increasing amounts of time'. (OECD, 2010b: 13-14, 34, 63)

[178] Obviously they are not directly comparable; reading patterns of children, adolescents and adults appear to differ significantly. Furthermore, for example, every time the OECD and IEA run their tests, they add new countries and communities and they refine their 'instruments'; reading statistics, like those in the 2011 PIRLS – 37% ELA, down from 52%-54% EHLA, and 28% as a measurement of those who 'like reading' – are as likely to reflect a changed metric of measurement as they are cultural change. (See also *Beyond PISA 2015: A Longer Term Strategy For PISA*; OECD, 2015)

[179] Perhaps predictably, and despite fears to the contrary, online reading "is associated with better reading performance". (OECD, 2010b: 42).

[180] The history is complex, spanning two centuries and arguably still extant in its derivations, being interwoven with the histories of 'industrial' literacy, periodical publication, railway literature, 'reading clubs' etc. See Q.D. Leavis, 1979: 19-24, 111-134; Dalziel, 1957: 4-9, 79-83; Darnton, 1990: 161-170.

[181] See Hoggart, 2001: 312; Tredell, 1994: 338; and Hoggart, passim. See also, in summary, Terry Eagleton: "Literacy has always been politically ambiguous in this sense: that the ruling class has never been able to decide whether it's been a good idea for the working class to learn to read or not." (Higgins and Eagleton, 2000)

[182] The IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) notes that three billion people have regular access to the internet, four billion do not. Public access facilities such as libraries can make a huge difference in this area. (IFLA, 2016b, 2016c)

[183] See OverDrive, 2016a, 201b; 3M, 2014, 2016.

[184] The International Publishers Association responded harshly to Mount's work on e-lending (see Mount, 2014b), arguing: "[Libraries] are no longer the only, or necessarily the fastest, most customer friendly, stable, easy-to use or even least expensive way to borrow e-books. [...Determining] appropriate terms of digital e-lending service providers will need to take into account not just the rather blinkered interest of libraries. Libraries, and indeed publishers, are no longer necessary for authors nor for readers. We must both earn our roles through the services we respectively provide. And nobody can expect the law to carve out a special niche that the reader does not need." (IPA, 2015; see also Thomson, 2014; ACRL, 2013: 6)

[185] Alongside a 'pre-internet' historical commitment to what is now termed 'information literacy' ('a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information'; ACRL, 2013: 4; ALA, 1989), libraries continue to spearhead research contributions to the future of the book. See, for example, the work of the American Library Association (the ALA, 'the oldest and largest library association in the world') and its academic arm, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL): ALA, 2010; Staley and Malenfant, 2010; Staley, 2012; ACRL, 2013.

[186] This is a 20-year-old problem, as yet unsolved. See Browning, 1993; 'Folding shelves: E-books mean a plot twist for public libraries and publishers', *The Economist*, 23/03/13; Mount, 2014a.

[187] The major publishing houses are reluctant to deal directly with (national / state / regional) library services, hence a perceived need for middle-men aggregators. Locally relevant content, however, deeply embedded in the philosophical approach of libraries, is poorly represented by the corporate interests of aggregators which typically do not allow for content not in their control to be shared on their platforms. It is questionable whether these 'third-parties' will survive into the future; right now they are the indispensable 'media storage space' for publishing that shelves and warehouses used to supply. (Mount, 2014a)

[188] See IFLA's 'Access to Information Central to the Post-2015 Development Agenda' (IFLA, 2013b). For a broader swathe of global library statistics, see IFLA's 'World Report Series' (IFLA, 2016d).

[189] In October, 2012, IFLA commissioned Civic Agenda to prepare a 'thinkpiece' (sic.) to inform discussion at a planned meeting of library and publishing sector experts. Their document contained some provocative arguments regarding a pro-licensing / 'leasing' / DRM model (Civic Agenda, 2012: 22-23 and passim), correctly reflecting the publishing industry's hysterical attitude that libraries providing 'free' ebooks to people was tantamount to theft (Civic Agenda, 2012: 7; Farrington, 2012b; Farrington, 2012a). FAIFE (IFLA's committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression) responded that licensing "lacks the control ultimately needed for libraries to provide the guarantee of free and unlimited access to information. [...] If publishers or content sellers of eBooks dictate use restrictions through DRM, this is completely against the spirit of libraries and the ethics of librarians." (Colomb et al., 2013: 2) This battle-cry for the democratisation of information, knowledge and education was winnowed into some marginally-less-militant principles subsequently articulated by IFLA's elending working group, endorsed by IFLA in February, 2013 and revised in April and again in August, 2013.

[190] The poem opens the Sieghart Review (An Independent Review of E-Lending in Public Libraries in England), published by the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media & Sport; paradoxically, the report is fairly conservative, arguing for 'frictions', which 'should evolve over time to accommodate changes in technology and the market'. (Sieghart, 2013: 8-11)

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[191] You can read a copy of Milton's agreement with Simmons at the Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900) Archive (hereafter PSOC), 'a digital archive of primary sources on copyright from the invention of the printing press (c. 1450) to the Berne Convention (1886) and beyond'. The example of *Paradise Lost*, amongst others, set a precedent for copyright law (and the attitude of publishers) which has persisted for centuries. See Milton's Contract (PSOC, 1667) and *Tonson v. Walker* (PSOC, 1751).

[192] There are other significant English language publishers, like Scholastic, and numerous large publishers in other languages, like Grupo Planeta, Grupo Santillana, De Agostini , Bonnier, the Egmont Group, the China Publishing Group, China South P&MG, Phoenix P&MC, and Shueisha, Kodansha, Shogakukan, and Kadokawa

(the last four all Japanese publishers of books, manga, bunkobon etc.). Many of these are bigger than a number of the 'five'; in fact, only Penguin-Random House (via their owners), Hachette (owned by Lagardère) and Macmillan (owned by Holtzbrinck) are 'trade' publishing houses ranked in the *Publishers Weekly* top ten global publishers.

[193] As noted elsewhere, as the exact sales figures in the publishing industry represent closely-guarded trade secrets, the picture even expert outsiders have is cobbled together from a range of broad sources (profit statements, media releases), uncertain projections and complex commentary. See Wischenbart, 2013: 21; IPA, 2014a: 13.

[194] "With a total market value of €95.6 billion, […] the 20 largest publishing markets account for just under 84% […]." (Wischenbart, 2013: 16) Moving into 2013, the market value of the 20 largest markets was estimated at still over €90 billion, including digital 'exports', calculated at €1,014 million from the US and €1,515 million from the UK (IPA, 2014a: 13-18).

[195] According to the IPA, Chinese book market net revenue in 2013 was only €9,173 million and market value €15,342 million, compared to the US's €19,563 million and €27,400 million. (IPA, 2014a: 13) However, China is atypical in that its state-run market is offset by an 'invisible market' in which officially banned but nonetheless operative private companies ('culture agencies') trade for ISBN numbers with official publishers and sell books in large quantities for which there is no complete and obvious official record (copyright laws were not enforced from 1949 until 1991; most sales are now tracked by Open Book, China's version of Nielsen). Despite significant 'piracy' issues, the official market is growing internationally (after China joined the Berne Convention in 1992 and entered the WTO in 2001; BIZ Beijing, 2012: 1-5; BIZ Beijing, 2014: 1-6; BIZ Beijing, 2015: 2-3). As to China's digitalisation and ebook progress, BIZ Beijing report that the stationary (brick and mortar) book trade in 2012 accounted for twice as much (33-34 billion yuan) as online book retailers (16-17 billion, rising to 20-21 billion in 2014; 50% accounted for by the three biggest online book distribution platforms: Dangdang, Amazon and Jingdong) and revenue from ebooks in 2014-2015 was only 4.5 billion yuan (Wischenbart, 2016: 102). However, this split may well be disappearing, as 2013 saw Amazon introduce the Kindle into China, publishers began to produce ebook-exclusive texts, and many online writers were cited as being among the country's richest authors. In 2014, there were 1.6 million digital books and 2.01 million 'original online works', and there are 70,000 new works per year (BIZ Beijing, 2014: 7-9, BIZ Beijing, 2015: 11-14; BIZ Beijing, 2016: 5). The other significant development is the growth of 'all media service' platforms and literature and distribution portals (e.g. dajianet.com from the China Publishing Group, and timeebo.com from the Time Publishing and Media Co., and Tencent, Sina, Alibaba and Baidu in the book market for smartphones, tablets etc.). The Chinese mobile reading market comprised 6.25 billion yuan in 2013, a rise of 80.1% from 2012. In 2014, there were 294 million readers of online literature in China (annual growth of 7.1%; 60% are 30-years old or younger), 242 million using their mobile phones as reading devices. (BIZ Beijing, 2012: 6; BIZ Beijing, 2015: 12)

[196] Wattpad and Goodreads were both founded in 2006; by 2016 Wattpad had 45 million members, Goodreads 50 million. According to their websites, Wattpad shares 250 million uploads (90% serialised storytelling) which are read for 15 billion minutes every month; Goodreads boasts 50 million reviews of 1.5 billion books. Wattpad is at the heart of the operable trends discussed, community engagement and technological innovation, as according to *Books And Publishing*: "53% of users write stories on their phones; 85% of the time spent on the site is via mobile phone or tablet […]." (B&P, 2014; Wattpad, 2016) As for more traditional channels, despite significant investment into sales and self-publishing platforms (e.g. My Independent Bookstore, Bookish, Archway, Author Solutions etc.), the Big Five are struggling to 'retake' the market share now occupied by Amazon (e.g. Writeon) and others (Smashwords, Blurb).

[197] PRH group revenues from publishing was reported at €3,717 million in 2015. Parent company Pearson, 'the world's leading education company', reported revenue as follows: $7,072m (2014), $7,801m (2013), $9,158m (2012), $8,411m (2011), $8,097m (2010). In 2012, Penguin represented 17% of Pearson revenue and 11% of profit (both down 1% from 2011); Penguin ebook revenues accounted for 30% US market, 17% worldwide, up from 20% and 12%, respectively, in 2011 (6% worldwide in 2010). Digital business has tripled for Pearson in the last decade. (Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b).

[198] Sales and profits were steady throughout 2012 and 2013 (sales €2.08 and €2.07 billion, respectively, profits €223 million both years) from the continued success of J.K. Rowling and E.L. James (revenues had

declined post-2009, when Hachette sold 45 million copies of *Twilight…*). Revenue in 2015 was reported at €2,206 million (Wischenbart, 2016: 16-17; *Publishers Weekly*, 2013c, 2014d)

[199] Despite initial concerns, Howey's premise and methodology are convincing; see Packer, 2014; Howey, 2014; Data Guy, 2014; see also Anderson, 2014; Flood, 2014b; Walter, 2014; Weinberg, 2014; and see also AE, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014f, 2014g, 2014h, 2014i, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2015f, 2016a, 2016b.

[200] The declining use in ISBNs in online markets, reflecting a rise in self-publishing, means not only is the ebook market a third to a half bigger than most statistics reflect, it is also a measure of the changing character of the future author, with online writing increasingly being taken up as part-time work or a paid hobby or perhaps even something intrinsic to a generational shift in cultural communication. (AE, 2015e)

[201] Broken down by Howey as: Indie self-published ebook Kindle Unlimited full-read equivalents (a deal offered by Amazon to writers whose work gets downloaded under the KU subscription offer): 155,000; Indie self-published regular retail ebook sales: 293,000; Small / Medium Publisher ebook sales: 204,000; Amazon-Publishing Imprint ebook sales: 115,000; Big Five Publisher ebook sales: 244,000; Uncategorized Single-Author Publisher ebook sales: 53,000. (AE, 2016a)

[202] By comparison – there have been ten iPads (including four iPad Minis; all tablets) since 2010 and eight Nooks since 2009 (technically all Nooks since the Nook Color (2010) have been tablets, with the notable exceptions of the Touch (discontinued) and the Glowlight ereaders; Kindles are all ereaders, except for the Kindle Fire tablet models).

[203] In 2010, it was estimated to be between 3 and 4 million. When the Kindle 3G came out in 2011, it was definitely in the millions (the Kindle Store had 'more than 810,000 books' at the time, over '670,000 of these priced $9.99 or less'…). Around Christmas of that year, they were selling a million per week (note: the fourth quarter is typically the most profitable for retail). See Wilhelm, 2010; Wauters, 2011, ITNews, 2011; see also Wischenbart, 2016: 130.

[204] As they noted in 2013: "[Ereaders], as exemplified by the Amazon Kindle, are [a] slate form factor device with epaper displays that are used to display consumer ebooks and periodicals. […] There will continue to be a small percentage of consumers who prefer a single-use ereader over a tablet, and this group will keep the market alive indefinitely, but we do not expect shipment growth to return to this market again." (IDC, 2013e)

[205] The short answer is ereaders do not ship in those numbers and Apple leads the tablet market. Of the 143.4 million tablets shipped in 2012, Apple shipped 65.7 million, of the 218.2 million tablets shipped in 2013, Apple shipped 74.2 million; of the 230.1 million tablets shipped in 2014, Apple shipped 63.4 million, of the 206.8 million tablets shipped in 2015, Apple shipped 49.6 million. By comparison, 26.4 million ereaders were shipped in 2011, 18.2 million in 2012, and sharply declining ever since. See IDC, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013f, 2013g, 2013h, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2016 (IDC Research is only available online for 18 months after the original publication date; you can still track everything, for now, through the Internet Archive). See also Wasserman, 2014; Kozlowski, 2015; Wischenbart, 2016: 136-139.

[206] To give this some kind of context, Internet Archive has over 10 million texts ('books and items'), Open Library has over a million downloadable ebooks, and 250,000 more in their lending library, whereas Google has, allegedly, 25-30 million but there's no clear figure of how many are public domain, freely accessible (Internet Archive, 2016b; Open Library, 2016; Darnton, 2013).

[207] See Wischenbart, 2016: 103; Gens, 2012; IDC, 2013f; 2013g; 2013h; 2013i; 2014a; 2014c; 2014d; 2014e.

[208] Commentators in early 2016 noted that while ebooks share of total book sales has peaked at about 20%, the widespread collapse of the bricks and mortar business has apparently slowed to almost nothing and, in fact, may pick up again, with the previously unlikely investment of Amazon in the sector (Wahba, 2016; Bensinger, 2016).

[209] The contrast is stark; Weldon: "We might tell our stories many different ways, whether that is books or ebooks, or apps, or toys, or clothes. We are developing a much broader range of intellectual property and

exploiting it." (Rankin, 2014); Le Guin: "Books are not commodities, and readers are not consumers, but the corporations, cultureless, with no ethical guidelines, nothing but their own profit growth in view, will treat them as such so long as they are allowed to." (Le Guin, 2012)

[210] In 2007, when Amazon brought out the Kindle, they essentially created the ebook market; they cemented their place in that market by selling ebooks at a significant, loss-leading discount from publishers. This was, inevitably, a threat to the profits of publishers and they collaborated with Apple, in preparation for the 2010 release of the iPad / iBookstore, to produce an 'agency model' for the pricing of ebooks (effectively agreeing on pricing structures that would not undercut their paper-book sales). Apple, in turn, demanded a cap on how much could be charged, along with a proviso to allow them to price-match competitors, i.e. Amazon. This was seen as anti-competitive and the companies involved were brought to court by the relevant government agencies (and through consumer class action suits). The big publishing companies all eventually settled. Apple did not, continuing to argue that their actions were, in fact, competitive – after all, Amazon allegedly held approximately 90% of the ebook market before the iPad was released. Apple lost the case, then lost again in the Court of Appeals, and then was denied a hearing by the Supreme Court in March, 2016. The publishers, who had agreed to a two-year limitation on retail price restraints, were separately locked into a timeline for renegotiation of their contracts with Apple (so they could not simultaneously renegotiate; to prevent another 'agency model'). As this period came to an end, Hachette was first against the wall when it came to dealing with Amazon. See Cote, *U.S. v. Apple, Inc., et al.*, September 6, 2012: especially the Dickinsonian argument on 20-21; Cote, *U.S. v. Apple, Inc., et al., State of Texas, et al. v. Penguin Group (USA) Inc., et al.*, July 10, 2013; Cote, *U.S. v. Apple, Inc., et al.,* September 5, 2013; Boutrous, Jr. et al., *Apple, Inc. Opening Brief (Court of Appeals)*, February 25, 2014; Samp and Andrews, *Washington Legal Foundation Amicus Brief (Court of Appeals)*, March 14, 2014. For a more extensive legal history of the Apple case, see *SCOTUS Blog*, http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/apple-inc-v-united-states/.

See also Flood, 2010; Trachtenberg and Fowler, 2010; *DBW*, 2012b; Milliot, 2012; Steadman, 2012; Albanese, 2012; Flood, 2012; *Publishers Weekly*, 2013b; Bosman, 2013; Albanese, 2013a; Albanese, 2013c; Parloff, 2013; USDOJ, 2013; Milliot, 2014; Albanese, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e.

[211] The fight between Amazon and Hachette follows other price disputes between major players (Barnes & Noble and Simon & Schuster in 2013, Amazon and Macmillan in 2010). During this public squabble, Amazon went so far as to misquote Orwell in their favour, arguing the historical parallel with the introduction of paperbacks; despite their literary misapprehension, the technological consideration is apt. On the business side, the most significant difference is this particular dispute followed on from the aforementioned lawsuit and will inform major negotiations for years to come. Amazon and Hachette eventually came to an agreement – agency terms, 'the right to fix the price of its ebooks' – in effect from December, 2014, followed by the other publishers (Streitfeld, 2014a, 2014b, Amazon Books Team, 2014a, 2014b; see also Greenfield, 2014e; Shepard, 2014; Worstall, 2014; Gaughran, 2014; Patterson, 2014; Shatzkin, 2014b; *Publishers Weekly*, 2015d).

[212] Many countries / cultures have a tradition of 'fixed prices' for books (the UK had a Net Book Agreement that lasted from 1900-1995) but in recent years competition and free trade laws have challenged them. Nonetheless quite a few survive. Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, France and Austria all have long-standing FBP laws / statutes; Spain, Portugal, South Korea, Argentina, Mexico, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Sri Lanka and Thailand have all introduced FBP since the 1970s. In fact, Slovenia introduced a FBP law in 2014. (IPA, 2014b: 2)

[213] In short, Nourry was just retreading the watery argument: "I would say that Google is the player the most likely to pose a clear and present danger to our industry. By now, the millions of books they have scanned without our consent make up the world's largest virtual library. [What's…] to stop them […] making all those books available for free on a non-profit basis? "; and pandering to IP 'pan-entertainment' fetishisation: "Isn't it a paradox to be in an industry with no growth and to eschew the booming market of digital content consumed on tablets […]. With the massive output coming from the talents we nurture – authors, publishers, designers, marketers […] – we have most of the skills needed to be players in adjacent industries that are attractive to audiences we no longer reach with our traditional books." (Jones, 2016; see also Albanese, 2016) Being 'attractive to audiences we no longer reach with books' is, in Nourry's mind, one way to stop 'agonizing about the future of books'.

[214] Amanda Ripley, in an article for *The Atlantic*, tells a story about Andreas Schleicher, then Acting Director for the OECD's Directorate of Education and Skills and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General, about how he travelled the world 'with a PowerPoint presentation detailing his findings': "He likes to end […it] with a slide that reads, in a continuously scrolling ticker, 'Without data, you are just another person with an opinion … Without data, you are just another person with an opinion …'" (Ripley, 2011; see also Schleicher, 2012). Arguably, even with data it is still technically only a matter of opinion, however informed.

[215] Charles Dickens was beleaguered by piracy, particularly from American publishers. In 1842, he went to the US, partly to argue for international copyright; he returned to England after a hostile reception (see PSOC, 1842; John Forster, 2008: 408). At the time, the larger American publishers would sometimes pay for 'early proofs'; if it suited them, they would simply reprint without any remuneration. One such publisher who made a fortune from exploiting Dickens in this manner was Harper & Brothers, now better known as HarperCollins. To this day, the company concedes no particular wrongdoing (see also Horton, 2007) but they were, in any modern copyright sense, pirates. As they put it in the pages of *'Harper's'* (1850): "[To] place every thing of the Periodical Literature of the day, which has permanent value and commanding interest, in the hands of all who have the slightest desire to become acquainted with it […, the] Magazine will transfer to its pages as rapidly as they may be issued all the continuous tales of Dickens […and] to publish it at so low a rate, and to give to it a value so much beyond its price, that it shall make its way into the hands or the family circle of every intelligent citizen […]." (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 2012: n. pag.; see also Dickens' letter of July 19, 1842, in Dickens and Hogarth (ed.), 2008 (originally 1880): n. pag.; Harper, 1912: 108-115; McParland, 2012: 45, 50-69 and passim; Rasmussen, 2007: 717)

[216] Hugo founded an organisation called the International Literary and Artistic Association in 1878 to protect the rights of authors and artists (Sainte-Beuve had also been fighting this crusade in the French Parliament, shortly before his death in 1869). In 1886, ALAI lobbied for and brokered the first agreement on international copyright in Berne, Switzerland; still active today, their website claims the ALAI 'promotes creativity by endeavouring to assure the protection of the moral and economic rights of creators in general, a goal that article 27(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also affirms'. Moral rights were tremendously important to Hugo – the idea that even if an author sold the economic rights to their work, they should still have a say in how it could be used; an idea eroded away almost to nothing over the last century but still fought for by the ALAI. For the past, see PSOC, 1866a; 1866b; 1886; and Haynes, 2010: 210-211 and passim; for the future, see ALAI, 2014a, 2014b.

[217] Despite enjoying the benefits of cheaper American editions in his early years, Mark Twain was subject to outrageous exploitation and piracy, like Dickens, and was equally furious about it. By 1888, he was arguing for the benefits of English law against American; three years later, the Chace Act in the US finally produced some measure of international copyright. Despite being posthumously enlisted as a copyright maximalist (after he went to Congress to argue for a bill of 'life plus 50 years' that ultimately failed, though the 1909 Act extended the period to 56 years, if renewed), there is ample evidence that Twain's favour of copyright was simply insurance against publishers and not especially counter to the public domain: "Mark Twain looks upon the [prior] copyright law as pure robbery. He believes that it is not designed in the interest of the public, but is simply a mechanism whereby after the author has enjoyed the fruits of his labor for forty-two years his property can be taken from him and handed over to a lot of publishers who had nothing to do with it. He considers it a law for the robbery of an author's children in the interest of the publishers. This is a tolerably conservative statement of his views – a radical statement of them would cause this issue of *The Times* to be excluded from the malls." (*The New York Times*, 1906; see also PSOC, 1888; PSOC, 1891; Clemens, 1906; Leary (ed.), 1969: 534; Twain, 1935: 381-382; Fox, 1998). In the '*Times*' article, Twain talked about reprinting all his work with newly-written autobiographical material to extend the copyright; to which there is a contemporary codicil worth noting. Long after his death in 1910, the University of California concocted a similar scheme to avoid previously unpublished Twain falling into the public domain (the Mark Twain Foundation's copyright on his autobiographical writings now extends to December 31, 2047) by publishing it in a ridiculously expensive, $50,000 three-volume microfilm set that practically nobody would or could buy (Bollier, 2010). Paradoxically, the subsequent income from this copyright has allowed them to republish the autobiography online for free, in a voluminous, annotated and searchable format (see the Mark Twain Project (2010-2015), in particular, the entries for 17/07/1906, 22/11/1906, 23/11/1906, 24/11/1906, 18/12/1906, 19/12/1906, 26/12/1906, 18/05/1907, and 24/11/1908).

[218] Catherine Seville offers a useful overview in the introduction to her *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England* (1999), about Sir Thomas Talfourd and the foundational Copyright Act of 1842, which, internationalised, provided the roots of modern copyright and intellectual property law. Concerning resistance to early copyright bills, she concludes: "It took time for this simple trade dispute to escalate, but eventually the debate encompassed a wider and far more explosive mixture of issues, […going beyond issues of copyright and censorship and…] including taxes on knowledge, popular education and free trade. […] Copyright became caught between those who valued intellectual property only prosaically and those who wished to associate its intangible qualities with the intangible in literature." (Seville, 1999: 4-5, 9) As discussed, these issues have returned in force with the development of the internet (variously – pirating of works, publishing of fan fiction and the construction of fan fiction worlds, Creative Commons licencing text and the much-debated alternatives to copyright and cultural monopoly, etc.) but there is, as yet, perhaps not enough discussion (echoing Seville, from a 19th- and early 20th-century context) of how 'a strengthened copyright law could hamper the dissemination of knowledge' and 'popular access to education' (ibid.: 12); in other words, literacy.

[219] WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, was the UN's post-war reorganisation of BIRPI, the United International Bureaux for the Protection of Intellectual Property (itself a reformation, in 1893, of the Berne Convention's organisation). WIPO globally centralised trademarks / industrial copyright / patents throughout the remainder of the 20th century (and, independently of the UN, grew powerful from all the money it collected). In 1996, following on from successive updates to Berne and related agreements (such as the newly-formed World Trade Organization's TRIPS, Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), WIPO brokered two specific 'TRIPS-Plus' treaties relevant to this discussion – the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT; updating music copy protection) and the WIPO Copyright Treaty (the WCT, which, among other things, updated coverage for computer programs). (See Balázs in Karaganis (ed.), 2011; PSOC, 1886; WIPO, 1883; 1886; 1995; 1996a; 1996b)

[220] As Lawrence Lessig argues, rearticulating the significance of the Statute of Anne (PSOC, 1710), copyright law came into being to regulate commercial publishers and for the first 100 years of copyright law it was only updated to include commercial transformative or derivative works. However, he notes: "Then in 1909, accidentally, because under copyright law this was an inappropriate way to refer to what they were trying to do, the word 'publish' was changed to 'copy'. [This…] created a potential that has produced the most dramatic change in copyright law in our history because the law now was regulating for men with machines and […] the scope of the regulation [eventually and unforeseeably broadened to include…] Xerox machines [and…] the Internet […]." (Fitzgerald (ed.), 2007: 17-18)

[221] According to Boyle (2008), we are experiencing a second enclosing of the commons, a digital struggle to unbridle privatisation and increase the value of private property, as it relates to intellectual property, particularly copyright (while trade mark, patent and copyright are all singularly different in and under the law, intellectual property is still a sensible way to discuss issues that more generally arise from them). See also Lessig, 2001; Lessig, 2004; Benkler, 2006.

[222] See NZFAT, 2016a; NZFAT, 2016b. The TTP is not to be mistaken for the TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) – the equally controversial US-EU version of the TTP… or TISA (the Trade in Services Agreement) – the equally terrifying global attempt to replace the democracies of peoples with the democracy of the market. (See Barker and Workman, 2013; Žižek, 2014, 2016a, 2016b)

[223] The last two decades have seen a frenzy of legislation, a struggle provoking historical comparison to the 18th-century 'battle of the booksellers'. PIPA was itself a rewrite of the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act (COICA) in 2010; there was also the narrowly avoided Collections of Information Antipiracy Act (1997) that spun off from the European Commission's Database Directive of 1996, essentially arguing that databases / data / facts were copyrightable – luckily a weaker version of the act was eventually passed that avoided a perpetual copyright monopoly that would have – or near enough – tried to make all knowledge private property. In some ways, the DMCA and NET (the No Electronic Theft Act, 1997, was part of a malicious and ineffectual campaign to stem the tide of 'illegal downloading' before downloading and streaming instead became the industry standard) later drew the template for the UK's Digital Economy Act (2010), just as WCT / WPPT did for other national legislation and international treaties that cover IP / copyright / free trade e.g. in the US, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA, 1998), and in the European Union, InfoSoc (the Copyright Directive, 2002). See Band, 1999; Motivans, 2004; Boyle, 2008; EFF, 2008; Friedlander, 2014; Friedlander, 2016.

[224] The CTE was a controversial and mostly successful attempt to provide corporations with 'effective perpetual copyright' (see Rimmer, 2004; Lessig in Fitzgerald (ed.), 2007: 21). In 2012, the Supreme Court upheld the decision of Congress in *Golan v. Holder*, another case about the constitutionality of retroactively extending copyright to works already in the public domain (following *Kahle v. Gonzalez*, Ninth Circuit Appeals, 2007, and *Eldred v. Ashcroft*, Supreme Court, 2003; all flowing on from the CTE – *Eldred* was about extending the term, and *Kahle* was about the opt-out provision). In support of the petitioners (arguing that it was unconstitutional), the ALA, Google, the ACLU, Creative Commons, Public Knowledge (etc.) all filed amicus briefs (the IPA, MPAA, etc. filed for the respondent). See also Tushnet, 2011; Denniston, 2012; *SCOTUS Blog*, http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/golan-v-holder/.

[225] These laws are deeply significant to the thesis being discussed. While the TPP is itself not yet an enforced reality, we have already seen numerous instances of proposed elements, like effective restrictions on fair use enforced by an aggressive defence of DRM (locking users / uses to providers; as seen with the DMCA), or putting the onus on ISPs (internet service providers) to police users and intensifying the adoption of criminal sanctions against infringers. However, as France found with its failed HADOPI law (2009-2013: forcing ISPs to police users who were then cautioned or otherwise penalised) and America saw with NET, penalising individuals has little effect on massive cultural change engendered by revolutionary technological change (whether by printing press, or peer-to-peer file-sharing networks). To date, policies targeting users are floundering in Sweden, New Zealand, the UK, South Korea and the US; effects include massive over-expenditure, disastrously punitive overkill and an all-round historical myopia. See Falkvinge, 2011a; Halliday, 2011; Pullar-Strecker, 2012; Doctorow, 2013a; Holpuch, 2013; Andy, 2013; Dredge, 2014; Lee, 2014.

[226] The CIE, who investigated at the behest of DFAT (post-agreement), commented: "The Office of Regulation Review reports that 'the market life of most copyright material does not exceed a few years' […]. If this is the case, the costs imposed by extending the copyright of existing works are not likely to be great." (Centre for International Economics, 2004: 38) This is of course totally back-to-front and the clearest argument imaginable to not sign up to agreements that lock up the majority of works under copyright to protect a handful of 'cash cows' (like Milne, whose Winnie-the-Pooh continues to make the Disney corporation between $3-6 billion annually). See also Drahos and Braithwaite, 2002; Rimmer, 2004, 2006.

[227] See Duke Law School's Center for the Study of the Public Domain, particularly the work they do celebrating Public Domain Day. (CSPD, 2014, 2016)

[228] Industry / lobby groups like the IIPA (International Intellectual Property Alliance) and IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) will say and do practically anything to ensure profits (to ever-expand the copyright bubble) – beg the US Government to sanction any and all other governments who won't imprison their citizens for sharing, accuse all peer-to-peer networks of promoting / producing child pornography, spam Google with 100 million 'piracy notices', etc. The idea that any of this is motivated by a Hugo-esque championing of creative rights is nonsense – moral rights and the public domain are bad for business. Copyright is good for business, worth over $1 trillion in 2012 in the US alone. See Karaganis (ed.), 2011; Falkvinge, 2011b; RT News, 2012; Miéville, 2012; Karaganis and Renkema, 2013; IFPI and Sterling, 2013; Siwek, 2014; IFPI and Moore, 2014; IFPI, 2014; IIPA, 2016; Wischenbart, 2016: 160-173.

[229] In 'Berne' you can see the hand of Hugo in moral rights, free / fair uses, the need for a special exemption for education and for a public domain; considerations which are decidedly emaciated in French legislation like HADOPI and DADVSI (Loi sur le Droit d'Auteur et les Droits Voisins dans la Société de l'Information), which implemented the EUCD / InfoSoc Directive out of the WIPO agreements (see WIPO, 1886; Legifrance, 2006; EUCD.info, 2006; see also Peifer in Bently et al., 2010: 347-357).

[230] Understanding the course of events is essential to appreciating the outcome. Action was commenced September 20, 2005. After extensive negotiation, the parties entered into a deeply controversial proposed settlement (announced October, 2008), which was later rejected by Judge Chin as 'not fair, adequate, and reasonable' (March 22, 2011; see Chin, 2013: 13-15; see also Le Guin, 2009; Newitz, 2010; Goldman, 2013; Turow, 2013). Further settlement discussions did not reach agreement. On May 31, 2012, Judge Chin granted the plaintiffs' motion for class certification – this was, however, vacated by the Second Circuit (July 1, 2013) following stayed proceedings and an interlocutory appeal by Google, and the case was remanded for consideration of 'fair use' issues (Google's defence all along). After hearing arguments on this, Judge Chin ruled in favour of dismissal (i.e. in Google's favour; in an exceptional twist of historical synchronicity,

the language of Judge Chin's ruling uncannily mirrored Harper's arguments when they launched their periodical, as noted above). Over the years that followed, the Authors Guild case failed at both Court of Appeals and Supreme Court levels (for a more extensive legal history of the Google case, see *SCOTUS Blog*, http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/authors-guild-v-google-inc/).

[231] A major orphan works provision was incorporated into the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 in the UK, laying the groundwork for the commercialisation of 'other people's copyright' (Orlowski, 2012). This, in our own moment of Dickensian futurity, could lead to yet another piratical publishing power-grab or, more hopefully, as per Lawrence Lessig, the protection of the public domain by requirement of active copyright renewal (see Wolf, 2003; see also IFLA-IPA, 2007).

❧

[232] Proust sets the scene: the narrator is at a soirée at the Guermantes's house and, after a series of chance encounters (tripping on cobblestones, the sound of a spoon on a plate; reconnecting him to the experience of the madeleine in the first book, rewiring his memories), he ponders whether we recreate the truth of life in art or whether it is art that compels us to see the truth in ourselves:

> That book of unknown signs within me (signs in relief it seemed, for my concentrated attention, as it explored my unconscious in its search, struck against them, circled round them like a diver sounding) no one could help me read by any rule, for its reading consists in an act of creation in which no one can take our place and in which no one can collaborate. [...] That book which is the most arduous of all to decipher is the only one which reality has dictated, the only one printed within us by reality itself. Whatever idea life has left in us, its material shape, mark of the impression it has made on us, is still the necessary pledge of its truth. [...] That which we have not been forced to decipher, to clarify by our own personal effort, that which was made clear before, is not ours. Only that issues from ourselves which we ourselves extract from the darkness within ourselves and which is unknown to others. And as art exactly recomposes life, an atmosphere of poetry surrounds those truths within ourselves to which we attain, the sweetness of a mystery which is but the twilight through which we have passed... (Proust, 2014: n. pag.)

(After a few more lines, he goes on in [1]; note: as Proust argues that 'it all depends on the examiner' or 'glass', I have therefore sampled all three of the major English translations of *Time Regained* (all read as unpaginated ebooks): Ian Patterson's (Penguin) translation, the D.J. Enright revision of the Terence Kilmartin update of the original Moncrieff (Modern Library, Random House), and, my favourite, the Schiff.)

[233] Patterson's translation phrases it as 'bringing the artist down' and ends with 'Gross unscrupulousness. A work in which there are theories is like an object with its price-tag still attached.' (Proust, 2003a: n. pag.) Enright-Kilmartin instead hash it out as 'the artist must be made to leave his ivory tower' (and their idiots use 'hackneyed phrases') and 'a gross impropriety'. (Proust, 2003b: n. pag.) There is a further, repetitive passage which highlights the theory depicted (P and E-K emphases included):

> It was, therefore, necessary for me to discover the meaning of the slightest signs that surrounded me [...]. Above all, I had, therefore to exclude words spoken by the lips but not by the mind; [...] those purely physical words uttered with a knowing smile by the writer who lowers himself by transcribing them, that little grimace which, for instance, constantly deforms [disfigures / spoils] the spoken phrase of a Sainte-Beuve, whereas real books must be children not of broad daylight and small-talk but of darkness and silence. And since art minutely reconstructs life round the verities one has apprehended in oneself, an atmosphere of poetry will always float round them, the sweetness of a mystery which is only the remains of twilight through which we have had to pass, the indication, like that of a measuring rod, of the depth of a work. (Proust, 2014: n. pag.)

I was going to add that he's unequivocally referring to 'Monday Chats' ('small-talk is also translated as 'chit-chat') but then Patterson's translation chimed in: "This is one reason why studies where people try to work out who an author is talking about are pointless." (Proust, 2003a: n. pag.) Perhaps so.

[234] There are at least two ways of reading the passage of [2] – the first is authorially (politically, about meaning, as per Deleuze); the second is personally (Proust's division but on the side of Sainte-Beuve) –

Proust's sexuality may or may not play some role in the book and its narrator but his use of the term 'inverse', meaning 'homosexual' (at least; sometimes more) is key. Here's how he leads into [2]:

> When it is a question of writing, we have to be scrupulous, look close and cast out what is not true. But when it is only a question of our own lives, we ruin ourselves, make ourselves ill, kill ourselves for the sake of lies. […] Furthermore, I realised that the most trivial episodes of my past life had combined to give me the lesson of idealism from which I was now going to profit. Had not my meetings […] proved to me how little material matters, that everything can be made of it by thought, a verity that the phenomenon of sexual inversion, so little understood, so idly condemned, enhances […]. The writer must not mind if the invert gives his heroines a masculine visage. This peculiar aberration is the only means open to the invert of applying generality to what he reads [… It] was by that road alone, narrow and tortuous though it might be, that he had access to the verities of love. It is only through a custom which owes its origin to the insincere language of prefaces and dedications that a writer says 'my reader'. (Proust, 2014: n. pag.)

So, a choice. You could easily read it as a straightforward, Sainte-Beuve-esque explanation for why Proust wrote an ostensibly heterosexual narrator obsessed with homosexuality; or you can take on Proust's dictum – or take it further and believe both.

[235] Patterson says 'read properly' but is otherwise on the same page; Enright-Kilmartin, rather oddly, buries the lead: "And the recognition by the reader in his own self of what the book says is the proof of its veracity, the contrary also being true, at least to a certain extent, for the difference between the two texts may sometimes be imputed less to the author than to the reader. Besides, the book may be too learned, too obscure for a simple reader, and may therefore present to him a clouded glass through which he cannot read. And other peculiarities can have the same effect as inversion." (Proust, 2003b: n. pag.)

[236] As Marion Schmid notes: "*Cahiers Contre Sainte-Beuve* [the ten notebooks] did at no time form a coherent, linear text, despite the misleading impression given by the two editions to date: Bernard de Fallois' *Contre Sainte-Beuve* of 1954 [later, Sylvia Townsend Warner's translation], and Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre's of 1971 [later, John Sturrock's translation]. Neither is there a continuous version of the *Sainte-Beuve* in the form of a narrative (the version that Fallois has artificially put together) nor in the form of a traditional essay (Clarac and Sandre's version)." (Bales (ed.), 2001: 59-60; see also, for background on the translators and foreground on the more recent Penguin translations, Kermode, 1994; Wood, 2005; Matz, 2005; Carter, 2013)

[237] I'm thinking of what Stuart Hall wrote: "The search for origins is tempting but illusory. In intellectual matters absolute beginnings are exceedingly rare. We find, instead, continuities and breaks. New interventions […] reconstitute existing knowledge under the sign of new questions. They dispose existing elements into new configurations, establish new points of departure." (Hall, et al., 1980a: 3; see also John Frow and Meaghan Morris in Storey (ed.), 1997: 359-361) Thus, for Hall, the institutional manifestation of Cultural Studies came from a breaking point but one built on a continuity from earlier work. He continues: "This earlier founding moment is best specified in terms of the originating texts, the original 'curriculum', of the field—Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* [1958], Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* [1961] and *The Long Revolution* [1965], E.P. Thompson's critique of the latter work [in *New Left Review*, nos. 9 and 10; 'a formative text for the Centre';] and the 'example' of related questions, worked in a more historical mode, in *The Making of the English Working Class* [1968]." (Hall, et al., 1980a: 3, 272)

[238] His complicated relationship with the critical 'school' / scholarship of both F.R. and Queenie Leavis is noteworthy in its evolution. In correspondence with F.R. about Hoggart's first book, on the poet Auden, Hoggart enthused: "I'd like to take this opportunity of saying in complete sincerity that I have learned more from you and from *Scrutiny* [Leavis's journal] – far more – than from anyone else." (Letter dated 04/05/1953, cited in Inglis, 2014a: 139; their relationship and its effect on '*The Uses*' is more generally discussed on 109-119.) It is easy to wonder how completely, or in what ways, he meant that (after Leavis wrote a review critical of the Auden book, it became clear that he had not, in fact read it, subsequently prompting an apology to Hoggart). Certainly, the Leavises had a recognisable influence. Later in life, in an interview with Nicolas Tredell, Hoggart noted: "I started by writing about the mass media of communication along the lines pioneered by Mrs Leavis [among others…]. Then I felt that wouldn't do, that I had to relate it to the lives and attitudes of the working-class people who bought such material. […] It produced what I suppose might be called a contrasting diptych, two pictures set side by side; the material and those who read it. In part also, I had been led to that by dissatisfaction with Mrs Leavis's contrasts, in *Fiction and the*

Reading Public, between popular novels and a much earlier generation of working people; that did not seem a true match." (Hoggart, 2001: 306) This distinction would have significant consequences: "[…When I set up the CCS…] I wished to set up a postgraduate centre […] which would essentially begin by using the methods of literary criticism and analysis […] and applying them to the study of society. […] The second [point], just as important, was about the need to look at people and places; with as much sympathy as you could summon. I had learned a lot from Leavis but was here modifying his approach along the way." (ibid.; see also Hoggart, 1970a: 128-130; Tredell, 1994: 331-332; Gibson and Hartley, 1998: 14; Hall in Owen (ed.), 2008b: 22-23; Collinson, 2009: 16-22)

[239] Hall describes the evolution of the Centre as both Leavisite and not; Hoggart in 'Schools Of English And Contemporary Society', his inaugural lecture at Birmingham in 1963, thanks the Leavises and then abandons them to instead advocate for critically engaging with soap opera, popular music and science fiction. See Hall, et al., 1980a: 5; Hoggart, 1970b: 246-259.

[240] When he was recruited for the English Department at Birmingham in 1962, Hoggart stipulated that he be allowed to create his own centre for 'contemporary cultural studies'. The university agreed but refused to pay for it. Hoggart then turned to Sir Allen Lane, the founder of Penguin, who consulted with Bill Williams, Penguin's chief editor. According to Hoggart, Williams responded: "Oh give him what he asks, Allen. You've made a fortune by riding cultural change without understanding it." (Inglis, 2014a: 152) The amount in question was £2,400 for seven years, though Chatto and Windus, his publishers, and *The Observer* also contributed. Receiving the money, Hoggart then recruited Stuart Hall, whose co-authored book *The Popular Arts* (1964) drew on *The Uses of Literacy*. Hoggart was only at Birmingham until January, 1970, when he joined UNESCO as Assistant Director-General for culture and communications (a job which lasted until 1975 and he returned to England, briefly sojourning at Sussex University, then taking up a post as Warden at Goldsmiths' College, London University). Hall, in turn, after a decade at the head of the centre, would move on to the Open University in 1979, succeeded by Richard Johnson. Hoggart and Hall both passed away in early 2014. (ibid.: ch. 6-8; Inglis, 2014b; Hoggart, 2001: 301-313; Hall in Storey (ed.), 1997: 336-337)

[241] But the story does not begin or end there. Hoggart had known Bill (Sir William Emrys) Williams since their days together in Army Education; Hoggart had been a regimental education officer when Williams was the deputy of the Director-General. The right for servicemen and servicewomen to be offered an education, post-war, was for them a significant struggle and it informed the strands of popular education and adult literacy that Hoggart would go on to pursue. Williams later brought *The Uses of Literacy* over to Penguin from Chatto and Windus, and their editions made it a bestseller; Hoggart, in turn, proved a key witness for Penguin in the obscenity trial over *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960. Hall notes that the grant was generously renewed shortly before Lane's death and, though it was not large, it proved invaluable: "Without it the Centre would have remained a loose grouping of graduate students working on broadly similar themes." (Hall, et al., 1980a: 271; and broadly, Inglis, 2014a: ch. 4-6).

[242] The first set of close textual readings (radio serials, magazines) not involving customs / behaviours – literary as opposed to sociological – begins with 'Illustrations From Popular Art – 'Peg's Paper'' on page 100 (Hoggart, 1971: 100-109, followed by a moving section on 'club singing'; ibid.: 123-137). He goes on to call it 'The Process Illustrated' and while addressing magazines, reading the pictures as 'text', he offers a detailed look at 'cheesecake' and mourns: "They are the most striking visual feature of mid-twentieth century mass-art; we are a democracy whose working-people are exchanging their birthright for a mass of pin-ups." (ibid.: 177) It is in observations like this that we can see the struggle illuminated – recognising the significance of cultural texts and evaluating them challenges more traditional, oppositional criticism; in the end he finds them – like great swathes of mass culture – 'ersatz', 'pasteurised', 'sealed-off'. (ibid.: 192) Tellingly, this part of the book was written first and it was this experience that challenged him to relate it 'to the lives and attitudes of the working class' and thus preface it the way he did.

[243] It is not well-known but *The Uses of Literacy* in fact came about in a similar manner to *In Search of Lost Time*: "a series of critical essays on popular literature […] that I wanted to relate […] to the day-to-day experience of people. After this, […] bits of a novel and some unconnected descriptive pieces […] began to fall into place […]." (McIlroy and Westwood (eds.), 1993: 111)

[244] A general, generational problem. Colin Sparks in 'The abuses of literacy', a fairly angry essay produced out of the CCCS in 1974, railed against "this shabby and contemptuous dismissal of the efforts of a new generation" (Gray, et al. (eds.), 2007: 112); Sparks' complaint, in short, on Hoggart, '*The Uses*' and cultural

studies – too much English Lit. worship, not enough Marxism – appears ignorant of Williams' critique on '*The Uses*' (and he does not seem to know, at the time, that his title was Hoggart's originally, before Hoggart thought better of it and went for something 'tantalisingly ambiguous'; Inglis, 2014a: 112, 119): "What happened in the case of Cultural Studies is that a number of thinkers, of varying degrees of ability, were lifted out of the Marxist tradition and gutted quite unhistorically for the light they could shed on other concerns. With staggering arrogance, the collective experience of millions of working people was tossed away with the label: 'profoundly residual'. […] Unless drastic measures are taken, Cultural Studies will remain a sideshow in the study of society and prove incapable of solving even those problems it currently sets itself." (Gray, et al. (eds.), 2007: 111, 118, 122; compare also Sparks, 'The evolution of cultural studies' (pages 14-30, especially footnote 24), with other Cultural Studies 'histories', those of Richard Johnson (75-114), Michael Green (49-60), Lawrence Grossberg (178-186), and Joel Pfister (287-299), all in Storey (ed.), 1997)

[245] Even as he deconstructs (an anachronistic term to use about Hoggart) the magazine advertisements and their relationship to the construction of the subjectivity of the reader and how this interconnects with the dominant textual narratives in play (effectively breaking them down to an atomic level), he is still bewildered: "They have no aim, no ambition, no protection, no belief. […These] are the figures some important contemporary forces are tending to create, the directionless and tamed helots of a machine-minding class." (Hoggart, 1971: 204-205)

[246] Not discontent enough with the structure or meaning of the texts, he assaults the language: "Short-winded sentences, with scarcely a subordinate clause in qualification, the epithets flat and tagging dumbly each to its noun; the lack of any texture or sense of depth: to use writing like this to describe character is like building a house from spent matchsticks." (ibid.: 193)

[247] It is telling that Hoggart then returns to an autobiographical ('coming of age') portrait – 'the scholarship boy' (on the effects on the working class of education – culture – that was previously the sole province of the 'higher' classes); here Hoggart's anger and anxiety is thus poignantly rendered all-at-once – the gratitude at the great sum of all his experiences (orphaned at eight, working-class-made-educated) producing a distance from the lives-that-do-not-add-up of others (in a way, all of Hoggart's work is explicitly biographical; it was his style). I intentionally chose these two moments in the book as almost all critiques and reviews hone in on them – 'the juke box boys' (his failure to appreciate the significance of 'to-him, at-the-time, alien' cultural change) and 'the scholarship boy' (reflecting both the strengths and weaknesses of Hoggart's romanticisation of certain aspects of working class culture, as opposed to others; the valuation of 'club singing' against 'the juke box' without even making the connection is very striking; see also Hoggart, 1995: 109-113).

[248] In *First And Last Thoughts*, Hoggart recalls a BBC talk where E.M. Forster (worrying about the death of books in the era of radio), opined that 'it is a mistake to think that books have come to stay. The human race did without them for thousands of years and may decide to do without them again.' Hoggart comments: "Strange that we have been brought to asking: who will go on reading? Who will retain the memories? Even stranger that people such as I, hoisted by books into a deeper and richer world than I could in childhood have ever imagined, may now be looking at a depopulating landscape. But I cannot really bring myself to believe that. The gain has been too great, for me as for so many." (Hoggart, 1999: 197)

[249] Who knows – he might have been right about the specific experiences and texts he was commenting on in England in 1952, that they had a different socio-historical character then than the space they would come to occupy in other cultures and periods (Tredell, 1994: 334). The fact is he struggled to see anything in the culture of (the decades leading up to) 1993 that was as good as the culture of the more distant past – there weren't any – or hardly any – more 'John Donne's for him, no 'King Lears' – people, he felt, just wanted to discuss 'soap operas', 'cartoons or popular fiction' (ibid.: 336-337; ironically, the things he had championed in his inaugural lecture; furthermore, he had already repudiated much of his specific critique by 1961, in his article 'Culture: Dead And Alive', a position far less remembered than '*The Uses*'; see Hoggart, 1970a: 131-134; Gibson and Hartley, 1998: 14-15).

[250] It is undeniable that during the first half of the past decade 'reading Richard Hoggart' became a peculiar, symptomatic cultural studies project. I am neither condemning nor, I think, overly celebrating this act of recuperation, if that's what it was; understanding Hoggart's work is a worthwhile activity, as parts of his legacy are definitely worth fighting for. See Owen, 2005, a brilliant piece of scholarship on the manuscript

of '*The Uses*'; the March, 2007 ('all Hoggart') issue of the Hartley and Owen (eds.) *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (vol. 10, no. 1); Owen (ed.), 2008a; Owen (ed.), 2008b; Clarke, 2010; Bailey and Eagleton (eds.), 2011; Bailey et al., 2011. See also Hartley, 2015: 18-19; and Hartley, 2014a, mostly for the extra footnotes.

[251] This was not Williams' first riposte. In the pages of *Adult Education*, in response to Hoggart's 'Some Notes On Aim And Method In University Tutorial Classes', he replied with 'A Note on Mr Hoggart's Appendices': "I feel certain that Mr Hoggart will not need convincing that the discipline of reading – with no other end in view than that of adequate response to an important text – needs no reservations educationally." (Williams, 1993: 144). Of course, Hoggart did need convincing – his reservations at the time, while ranged against 'a narrow snobbery of intellect and information', still argued for a Leavisite methodology to deal with issues like 'the problem of popularization without vulgarization' (while nonetheless dismissing Leavis's arrogant style with equally pompous metaphors – 'I no longer flash across their line of vision a piece of real silk and a dazzling imitation, and then proceed to show them how hopelessly they have been misled...'). See Jarvis and Griffin (eds.), 2003: 71-77; for a far more detailed and critical analysis of the theoretical intersections between 'early' Hoggart and Williams, see part one of McGuigan's *Cultural Populism* (2003); ch. 1 of Jones's *Raymond Williams's Sociology of Cultures*, 2006; and ch. 5 of Horowitz's *Consuming Pleasures*, 2012.

[252] One of three reviews of '*The Uses*' in that issue, Williams's essay preceded his other, later, better-known review 'Fiction and the Writing Public' (Williams, 1993: 106-110), in which, apart from connecting Hoggart's tradition to Leavis (and, oddly enough, suggesting Hoggart should have written a novel instead, as Leavis also did), he rehashes some of his previous critique then makes it over into a claim for reviving the realistic novel. It also notably and pre-emptively precedes the argument of his 1958 essay 'Culture is Ordinary' (reprinted in Williams, 1993) and book *Culture and Society* the same year. See Williams, 1977: 306-314.

[253] The two theorists were alike in class and educational background but differed in orientation: "At the time when Richard Hoggart and I were inseparable, we had not yet met. It still seems reasonable that so many people put his '*Uses of Literacy*' and my '*Culture and Society*' together. One newspaper went [...so] far as to refer, seriously, to a book called '*The Uses of Culture*' by Raymond Hoggart. But as I say we did not then know each other, and as writers we were pretty clear about our differences as well as our obvious common ground." (Jones, 2006: 4)

[254] Williams was once described by Terry Eagleton as 'Left-Leavisite', a label which he rejected (as it is 'a false diagnosis because it leads to the projection of the whole complex onto the entire work'; it is, perhaps, more accurate of Hoggart). Williams, moreover, notes a history to the close-reading tradition often forgotten: "[It] is necessary to make a distinction here between practical criticism and Leavis. Leavis was certainly the most powerful exponent of practical criticism: therefore in retrospect he is often assumed to be its originator or director. But if you look at the actual history, the mode of practical criticism was established within Cambridge English during the twenties by [I.A.] Richards. It was he, after all, who coined the term." (Williams, 1979: 190, 195; passim: 190-197; see also Williams, 1993: 103-105; and Jones in Milner et al. (eds.), 2006: 243-248) The effect on Leavis of Richards' work is worth a moment of consideration; there is, I think, an under-examined history where Leavis's book *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (1933) forms an interesting nexus of thought bridging the methods of Richards and Hoggart. See Leavis and Thompson, 1964: 6-7, 147-148.

[255] Hoggart and Williams are on the same page (if reading from different translations) when it comes to addressing the media, here. The centrality of a critical education and democratised media splits mainly over the idea of how privately-owned media could be made to serve the public interest – Hoggart sees the 'power of Penguin', etc., Williams is more generally sceptical. A half-century later, both seem more radical than the mainstream contemporary tolerance for corporate ownership and its philosophical advocacy of 'education-for-the-stability-of-the-economy': "There is the problem of democratic control of these media, for here it is a straight choice, because of the capital involved, between existing types of ownership and some kind of social ownership. There is the further problem of a really adequate educational system, which will make people more free to use these media critically." (Williams, 1957: 30; see also Hoggart, 1995: 317; and Hoggart, 1982: 119-124)

[256] He goes on, drolly: "That shouldn't worry anybody persuaded by structuralism's synchronic critique of the diachronic cult of origins. Pyramids of knowledge don't rest on foundations, Jean Piaget argued

[(*Structuralism*, 1971)], but are instead suspended from their apexes, where cutting-edge researchers specify the precursors who legitimate their activities." (Ruthven, 2013: 308; note: the 'cult of origins' is a reference, presumably, to Freud, Foucault and Kristeva)

[257] McLuhan studied with Leavis and Richards at Cambridge; that Williams and Hoggart and McLuhan all came from a similar 'literary theory' place and then moved on is not, I think, insignificant. It does appear that Hoggart found McLuhan's inconsistency frustrating even as others have found Hoggart's consistency tedious. Writing on *Understanding Media* (1964), Hoggart notes: "McLuhan's 'mosaic' approach sometimes has great cumulative force, sometimes fruitlessly yokes things together, sometimes is repetitive. Still, in this kind of free-range thinking about communications, McLuhan stands on his own. You don't simply learn something new from each of his books; you see certain things differently ever after." ('On Cultural Analysis: Marshall McLuhan and Making Choices'; Hoggart, 1970a: 114-115); overall, "[reading] McLuhan is like being on a big-dipper operated by an imaginative but scatty intellectual. There is a continuous heady swing and swoop, an epigrammatic snap-crackle-and-pop, an enormous and fascinated hospitality to the multitudinous phenomena of the contemporary world." (ibid.: 115) Of course, Hoggart in the UNESCO years may have felt differently, trying to secure literacy funding from a Secretariat who "had a vision (often nourished on McLuhan and water) of helping such societies to skip the whole Gutenberg revolution, to go in one step from dispersed and tribal oral cultures to a unified, centralized, national culture, through the medium above all of the transistor radio […]." (Hoggart, 'The Importance of Literacy', 1980: 83-84)

[258] His acknowledgement of a third break, feminism, which 'radically altered the terrain of Cultural Studies' (Hall, et al., 1980a: 27) is, to my mind, very respectfully intimated: by which I mean that he doesn't shy away from his own failings (admittedly in hindsight; ibid.: 280, 33). See also Morley and Chen (eds.), 1996: particularly 268-269, on feminism's impact.

[259] This is from the endnotes to the essay (where he is arguably more open and less defensive, less rhetorical, than in the essay proper). He goes on: "Either Theory is everything – giving intellectuals a vanguard role which they do not deserve – or Practice is everything – which results in intellectuals denying their function in an effort to pass themselves off as 'something else' (workers, agitators, urban guerrillas). One of the deep problems for the Centre has been finding and sustaining a proper, disciplined understanding of the place, possibilities, limits and conditions of the 'intellectual function' in our society […]." (Hall, et al., 1980a: 280)

[260] Such as Dick Hebdige's 'Reggae, Rastas and Rudies', John Clarke's 'The Skinheads and the magical recovery of community', Paul E. Willis's 'The Cultural Meaning Of Drug Use', etc. (Hall and Jefferson (eds.), 2006).

[261] See Women's Studies Group (eds.), *Women Take Issue* (2007; originally 1978); see also Davis, 2004: 126-130.

[262] The genesis of its publication was a conflict that occurred between members of the New Left (and the *New Left Review*), the CCCS and other Birmingham academics, and the 'History Workshop' (often between people who belonged to all three). In 1974, Thompson apparently visited the CCCS to argue his position on Althusserian structuralism. The book, responding to the changing theoretical climate (articles in the '*NLR*' etc., the CCCS position) was written in February, 1978 and published later in the year. Richard Johnson published his 'Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese and Socialist-Humanist History' essay in the Autumn 1978 issue of the *History Workshop Journal* (no. 6) and there was a cascade of responses in the '*Journal*' from 1978-1980. In February, 1979, Thompson again visited the CCCS to discuss Althusserian theory, and, in December 1979, thereafter gave a speech to the History Workshop Conference in Oxford, angrily rejecting the CCCS characterisation of his work as 'culturalism'; the speech, I believe, was later published as 'The Politics of Theory' and eventually became the postscript to the edition of *The Poverty of Theory*. See Johnson's history in Gray, et al., 2007: 768-770 and 791-809; and see Thompson, 1995: 278-303 and ix-xi, Dorothy's introduction.

[263] The overlap is extensive between the two pieces (unsurprising considering the timeframe) but the latter was written for *Media, Culture and Society* (Hall, 1980b: 57-72; also reprinted in Storey (ed.), 1997: 31-48); Hall is now attached to the Open University, starting anew: "In serious, critical intellectual work, there are no 'absolute beginnings' and few unbroken continuities. Neither the endless unwinding of 'tradition', so beloved of the History of Ideas, nor the absolutism of the 'epistemological rupture', punctuating Thought

into its 'false' and 'correct' parts, once favoured by the Althussereans, will do." (Hall, 1980b: 57) He then reiterates the 'culturalism' mythology before switching up to Althusser (ibid.: 64) and points further afield; it was this ongoing CCCS rendering of their shared history that so particularly upset Thompson: "This category of culturalism is constructed from some sloppy and impressionistic history. Examine [Richard] Johnson's description of 'the Moment of Culture'. 'Roughly mid-1950s – early 1960s.' 'Key texts: Raymond Williams's early work: EPT's 'Making': Hoggart's 'Uses'.' This gives us a mish-mash, a 'cultural' blur." (Thompson, 1995: 287) Which was true; the CCCS had written its own local history and forged its own cultural connections but had then embraced foreign theory, moved on. "It is not a question," Thompson continued, "of the theoretical rights or wrongs of the issues: the critique [of culturalism], then or now, may have force. It is simply a question of getting the history straight, which as historians we ought to do." (ibid.: 288) In the interests of keeping the history straight (Thompson was obviously unaware), the mish-mash was Hoggart's (not Hall's, not Johnson's): he had made those connections as early as 1966 when he published 'Literature And Society' in Norman Mackenzie's (ed.) *A Guide To The Social Sciences* (Hoggart, 1970b: 31).

[264] 'Follies' (in a very English sense) could mean an extravagant, over-the-top performance (theatre) or the construction of a completely unnecessary structure (architecture); so, from Thompson's view on Althusser, either way. See Thompson, 1995: 18; passim. Amazingly, he and Dorothy Thompson wrote the whole book in only two weeks; understanding it as a particular response to a historical moment grounds it more effectively, yet it still resonates: "I am sorry to disappoint those practitioners who suppose that all that is necessary to know about history can be constructed from a conceptual meccano set. One can only return, in the end, from these explorations with better methods and a better map [...]. On the margins of the map we will always meet the boundaries of the unknown." (ibid.: 225-226)

[265] Considering the '*Understanding*' authors compare Hoggart directly to Althusser ('Although Hoggart is frequently represented as resistant or even hostile to Theory...'), partially to delineate his thoughts about literature but writing out, in fact, stark contrasts, I doubt Hoggart or Thompson would be overly impressed (Bailey, et al., 2011: 19-21). Perhaps this is what Ruthven picked up on, although he certainly didn't elaborate on it. For what it's worth, this is a simplified, foreshortened version of the history and yet also one admittedly grounded in long-past argument. Nonetheless the point is to show the history of Hoggart's developing argument on critical literacy, and situate Ruthven's critique by reference to the analogous prior argument between Johnson and Thompson. To see Johnson's Althusserian position clearer, see his three essays in Clarke et al. (eds.), 1979: and especially 42, 65-71, 201-203.

[266] From Hoggart – we do the best we can with what we have (and for Hoggart that was a critical literacy carved from literary classics). In *The Way We Live Now*, he argued: "Good theory brings together, like a magnet in iron filings, an enormous number of previously unorganised thoughts. But we have to earn the right to use it. It must not be made into a charm, or a prop; or a waffle-iron to be banged on top of the material, so that the vile body is cut to the shape which fits the preconceived, pre-shaped theory." (1995: 178-179) Or, to paraphrase Thompson – 'theory is on our side, we are not on the side of theory' (he in fact said 'Marx' not 'theory' but as he then quoted Dickens and substituted the name Gradgrind for Althusser without comment, I thought it fair; Thompson, 1995: 258). See also Jim McGuigan (78-79) and Lawrence Grossberg (60-63) in Owen (ed.), 2008b.

[267] Critical literacy both precedes and follows on from other traditions of reading ('practical criticism', 'close reading', 'symptomatic reading') refined and practiced in academia by generations past. Arguably, also, concern over terminology ('dictating terms') is always somewhat faddish in hindsight. Historically speaking: the prior work of I.A. Richards on 'practical criticism' was felt to have eventually foundered on the rock of Leavisite 'knowledge' of minority appreciations against mass culture; when the ship of structuralism sailed into the CCCS, they more or less ignored the wreck still stranded there. However, if you read Richards' *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (originally published in 1929), it could be argued he hit the rock himself. It's a fascinating text ("this book is the record of a piece of field-work in comparative ideology"; Richards, 1930: 6), mostly about how Richards got his students to read poems without their titles or author(ity) attached, then analysed the results. I'm sure there are those who would baulk at the comparison but it strongly prefigures Roland Barthes' *S/Z* (speaking of 'cultural critique in the close reading of literary texts'...; see also his warning against 'irresponsible incursions'; ibid.: 321-322): there's page upon page of interpretative meanings, revealing structures... until the reader finally collides with Richard's 'four kinds of meaning' and 'ten difficulties of criticism' and the ship 'RV True Interpretation' hits rock bottom. Still (having diligently removed the following quote from its context), it's funny how we got from Richards and Leavis to Hoggart and Williams to here: "It would be absurd to compare the effects upon our minds of

the masterpieces of antiquity with those that an attentive scrutiny of these scraps of literary opinion may produce. But there is an obverse aspect to every human achievement. And there is in the inner history of every opinion, if we can examine it and compare it with the other opinions it so narrowly missed becoming, a spring of ironical comedy." (ibid.: 350) See also Williams, 1977: 239-257.

[268] These are not merely examples of people who speak and theorise from their lived experience, they are the specific examples Ruthven gives: "Wholly dependable when analysing the insidious ubiquity of British class-distinctions, Hoggart's personal experience was an inadequate guide through the cultural upheavals of the 1960s." (Ruthven, 2013: 310)

[269] I'm thinking here of Ruthven's descriptions of his own hard work to have cultural studies 'mainstreamed' in Australia; which is, and it may not have been obvious from my response, sincerely laudable and much appreciated. (ibid.: 310-312)

[270] There is another key theoretical overlap with Hoggart here, that of Raymond Williams's use of the term 'high literacy'; although his use over time shifts from cautious criticism (see 'Culture is Ordinary'; Williams, 1993: 99) to a more ebullient advocacy, as in 'Writing, Speech and the 'Classical'' (1984): "It is high literacy, finally, which calls the bluffs of authority, since it is a condition of all its practical work that it questions sources, closely examines offered authenticities, reads contextually and comparatively, identifies conventions to determine meanings: habits of mind which are all against, or should be all against, any and every pronunciation of a singular or assembled authority." (Williams, Higgins (ed.), 2001: 276; see also Higgins and Eagleton, 2000; Higgins and Said, 2001)

[271] He wrote about this issue in the 1980 BBCTV2 lecture 'Leisure And Education In The Eighties', in at least two versions of a lecture called 'The Importance Of Literacy' (at the CUNY Conference and the Shaughnessy Memorial Conference; both 1980) and to some extent in 'Language And Literacy Today' (1979). The Shaughnessy lecture is reprinted in *The Journal of Basic Writing* (Volume 3, Number 1: 'Toward A Literate Democracy'; Fall/Winter 1980: 74-87), which more generally contains the proceedings of the first Mina Shaughnessy Memorial Conference, April 3, 1980. The other essays / lectures are collected in *An English Temper: Essays On Education, Culture And Communication* (1982). I should say, rather, that arguments are sprinkled everywhere, too many to bother counting, from one end of his career in '*The Uses*', to the other in *Mass Media In A Mass Society* (2005: 191-193) and *Promises To Keep* (2005: 31), connecting visions of critical literacy with the potential result of an improved and articulated ordinary day-to-day life on the one hand, and the broader priorities of human rights and freedom of speech on the other. See also Gibson and Hartley, 1998: 13, 22; and Graeme Turner's practical experience of it in 'Critical Literacy, Cultural Literacy, and the English School Curriculum in Australia' in Owen (ed.), 2008b: 159, 160-161, 165-169.

[272] In *An Idea And Its Servants* Hoggart recounts how, back in 1966, he met a delegate to UNESCO from Mali who, while talking to him about threats to oral cultures, said: "'When an old man dies in one of our villages a whole library disappears.' That sentence more than any other took me to UNESCO." (Hoggart, 1978: 17) It's arguable whether Hoggart was able to accommodate oral cultures in his view of critical / creative literacy – he mourned the loss of the 'library' but discounted the complexity of the humans who contain it; in short, I think we need to be open to the critical possibilities of non-traditional literacies, too.

[273] It's worth noting that at this point in the lecture he's railing against 'the uses of language' by advertisers and public relations 'professionals' and the way they play merry havoc with society and democracy; this is not new grist for him – he was already thinking about it when he gave his inaugural lecture at Birmingham in 1963 (Hoggart, 1970b: 252).

[274] Radical theorists and campaigners Paulo Freire and Donald Macedo make a strong argument for critical literacy in the 'Preface' to *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, arguing that it represents a profound injustice, weakening democratic institutions and "[exacerbating] the unjust, asymmetrical power relations that characterize the contradictory nature of contemporary democracies." (Freire and Macedo, 1987: n. pag.) They go on: "In order to overcome, at least partly, this 'crisis of democracy', a critical literacy campaign must be instituted […] that transcends the current debate over the literacy crisis which tends to recycle old assumptions and values concerning the meaning and usefulness of literacy, that is, a notion that literacy is simply a mechanical process which overemphasises the technical acquisition of reading and writing skills. […] In our analysis, literacy becomes a meaningful construct to the degree that it is viewed as

a set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people […,] whether it serves to reproduce existing social formation or […] promotes democratic and emancipatory change." (ibid.)

[275] As he in fact did in his paper 'Literacy and the Crisis in Europe Today', delivered to a UNESCO conference in 1990: "Critical literacy [is…] the only truly emancipatory level of literacy democratic societies worthy of the name should develop […]. Literacy can only reach its full potential in a free society. Basic literacy will only produce 'helots', slaves to consumerism, religious fundamentalism and so forth." (Note: this quote is part of a summary of Hoggart's speech by Mrs. Leslie Limage of UNESCO, collected in Bélanger, et al., 1992: 19-20). Contrasting Hoggart's concept with Freire's approach in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) is worthwhile here: Freire and Hoggart both envision a result that goes far beyond 'the basics' but for Freire "critical thinking" is introduced into dialogue with students and the dialogic process leads to real communication and thus education (Freire, 2005: 92-93; see also 167-169 on cooperation and 101-124 on the use of generative themes; this in contrast to what he calls the 'banking' method of education, teacher-directed, 73-75). Both see the goal as teaching people to 'think for themselves' although Freire's method arguably requires more humility and supposes a more attuned psychology (pedagogy) on the part of the educators (than Hoggart elaborates, at any rate; his own experience in adult education notwithstanding).

[276] As long as we continue to act like literacy is only a matter of giving people an instruction manual for the most basic operation of their lives then we have failed to address the question of the uses of literacy: "To be illiterate does not mean simply to be unable to read and write. It means existing in a twilight world where all sorts of aids to growth are not available to you. […] Even if people are made literate that is not in itself enough, as UNESCO discovered years ago. Simple literacy, with nothing consistently to feed on, drains away. The practice of literacy is part of the growth of our whole being and of our involvement with others […]." (Hoggart, 1982: 75)

[277] He concludes, echoing Walter Benjamin: "History is a form within which we fight, and many have fought before us. Nor are we alone when we fight there. For the past is not just dead, inert, confining; it carries signs and evidences also of creative resources which can sustain the present and prefigure possibility." (Thompson, 1995: 303)

[278] There's no doubt Thompson's challenge affected Hall. In an essay, 'The Toad In The Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists', Hall, in direct response to '*Poverty*', shoved theory against the material / concrete experience of life in Thatcher's England (still, he referred to '*Poverty*' as "an ill-judged, intemperate exercise"; Nelson and Grossberg (eds.), 1988: 35); from the 'discussion' that followed the essay (as published): "I want to undermine the notion that theory consists of fully clarified concepts that are in a box in somebody's attic and one day you go up and open Pandora's box and let the truth out. I want to suggest that theorizing is a process – the operation of scientific concepts on the ground of theoretical ideologies – that always operates by deconstructing existing paradigms and at the same time snatching important insights from what it is tossing out." (ibid.: 68) This dialogue continued – Thatcher, cultural studies, concrete engagements – in the article he wrote for *October*: 'The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities' (1990: 11-23): "My own memories of Birmingham are mainly of rows, debates, arguments, of people walking out of rooms. It was always in a critical relation to the very theoretical paradigms out of which it grew and to the concrete studies and practices it was attempting to transform. So, in that sense, cultural studies is not one thing: it has never been one thing." (1990:11; see also Morley and Chen (eds.), 1996: 149-150). He was still, however, repeating the 'culturalist' origin story (1990: 12); perhaps that was the best one he knew. Over time, the engagement with theory became more contemplative, rueful: "I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with the angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency." (Morley and Chen (eds.), 1996: 265)

[279] Nor 'rebooting' or 'retconning' – retroactive continuity – 'new media' genre terms for Ruthven's 'cult of origins' and its legitimation of activity; not that Hoggart would have stood still for any such nonsense. See Hoggart, 1995: 173; though he perhaps provides his own rebuttal, ibid.: 181. See also Potts and Hartley, 2014: 35-39, 52-55, for a crushing argument against an Arnoldian tradition, which should firmly be extended to the Arnoldian in Hoggart.

[280] Clare is strident yet forthright: "What these rights, alternatives and problems may be is not defined, and although it is reasonable not to preach subversion in a document addressed to the government there is no sense in what follows of inequalities of power dividing along the lines of class, race or gender, nor of

structures within society that might themselves require change." (Gray et al. (eds.), 2007: 1017) The paper was listed in the acknowledgements as "Stencilled Paper No. 80, 1985" (ibid.: xv), which, according to the Cadbury Research Library (Special Collections, University of Birmingham), indicates it was one of those "articles [1972-1988] – generally works in progress – that were self-published by the Centre and written by Centre students or staff members. The aim of these papers was to disseminate ideas to external audiences which, in the early 1970s at least, were only beginning to become familiar with the nature of the cultural studies project." (Connell and Cadbury Research Library, 2013: 18)

[281] It is a UNESCO black hole: few seem to want to quote it in detail. See examples such as UNESCO, 2005: 136; Wagner, 2011: 319; and this: "For most of history, most humans have been illiterate. Literacy as an essential human skill rose to high importance only in the 1800s, because of the rapid growth and spread of knowledge, technology and industrialization. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized the right to education through systematic schooling in 1948, it did not mention literacy explicitly. Express recognition of literacy as a human right came only in 1975 with the Persepolis Declaration, when an International Symposium for Literacy convened by UNESCO, meeting in the ancient Persian/Iranian city of Persepolis, issued a four-page document that included the sentences: 'Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right.' […] In other words, recognition of literacy as a human right has come very late in history. Nonetheless, these declarations have given rise to what is currently termed a 'rights-based approach' to planning and developing educational and literacy programmes." (Oxenham, 2008: 24) In other 'other words', this is what a 'rights-based approach' is worth: "In general terms, the minimal obligation that a society or its government bears is to ensure that no third party prevents a person from exercising a right." (ibid.: 25) Not really in the spirit of Persepolis, is it?

[282] The final line is omitted from Hummel's text (though not from UNESCO, 1975; or Clare in Gray et al. (eds.), 2007: 1018) but the declaration is still powerful, didactic, even so: "The International Symposium for Literacy, meeting in Persepolis from 3-8 September, 1975, in unanimously adopting this Declaration, considered literacy to be not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims […]." (Hummel, 1977: 68); "Literacy is therefore inseparable from participation, which is at once its purpose and condition. The illiterate should not be the object but the subject of the process whereby he becomes literate." (ibid.: 72) 'Persepolis' outlines a fairly radical list of structures that favour literacy: participatory democracy, socially-responsible economic systems, education that does not reproduce or result in class privileges, community control over technology, co-operation towards basic social goals. (ibid.: 70) It is no wonder that this Declaration is not much quoted now except for its claim to 'rights' (i.e. not what people should do with them).

❧

[283] Obviously I cannot speak to the accuracy of any translation or interpretation (that said, if you've seen the *Angelus Novus*, you can appreciate the extrapolatory power of Benjamin's exposition), though my own reading of Benjamin reflects many such sources. One concern is worth recognising, hopefully avoidable. Benjamin in a letter to Gretel Adorno, April, 1940 (quoted by Lloyd Spencer in 'On Certain Difficulties with the Translation of 'The Concept of History'', a work I could myself only access with the Wayback Machine, but originally from the *Gesammelte Schriften*, the German *Collected Writings*; 1991: 1226-1227) wrote: "The war and the constellation it brought with it has lead me to set down certain thoughts about which I can say that I have kept them in safe-keeping for almost twenty years; yes, I kept them even from myself… In more than one sense the text is… reduced. […] I need not tell you that nothing is further from my mind than the publication of these notes (not to mention in the form in which you have them). That would leave the door wide open to enthusiastic misunderstanding."

[284] There are other, more complicated ways of relating this; see Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, 1981: 176. There are also simpler: Jameson, '*Postmodernism*', 1997: 36.

[285] This is in reference to Adorno (although it won't make perfect sense yet): "The mediation is not a compromise between commitment and autonomy, nor a sort of mixture of advanced formal elements with an intellectual content inspired by genuinely or supposedly progressive politics." (Adorno, 'Commitment', in Arato & Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 317-318)

[286] Insomuch as these are the works of his that he refers to, ruminates on or repudiates; to some extent it is also based on *Trouble With Strangers* (2009), *How To Read A Poem* (2007), *Crazy John And The Bishop* (1998), *The Illusions Of Postmodernism* (1996), *Heathcliff And The Great Hunger* (1995), parts of *Against The Grain: Essays 1975-1986* (1986), the essay 'Wittgenstein's Friends' (1982) and *Myths Of Power* (1975). The simple fact is that Eagleton is erudite, even when it comes to his own work.

[287] As in: "We can turn now to the moral dimension of literary works. I use the word 'moral' to signify the realm of human meanings, values and qualities, rather than in the deontological, anaemically post-Kantian sense of duty, law, obligation and responsibility." (Eagleton, 2012: 59)

[288] In fact, Eagleton could be thinking of Hoggart specifically when he writes things like this: "The humanist is thus not wrong to trust to the possibility of such universal values; it is just that nobody can yet say exactly what they would be, since the material conditions which might allow them to flourish have not yet come into being. If they were ever to do so, the theorist could relievedly lay down his or her theorizing, which would have been made redundant precisely by being politically realized, and do something more interesting for a change." (Eagleton, ibid.: 208)

[289] The 2008 anniversary edition of *Literary Theory: An Introduction* sees this shifting historically. Eagleton in 1983: "It is therefore difficult to engage such critics in debate about ideological preconceptions, since the power of ideology over them is nowhere more marked than in their honest belief that their readings are 'innocent'." (Eagleton, 2008: 173) Eagleton in 2008: "One battle which cultural theory has probably won is the contention that there is no neutral or innocent reading of a work of art." (ibid.: 207-208); 'probably' being the necessary qualifier.

[290] Early on he has his own I.A. Richards-like moment where he surveys the landscape empirically, then cheerfully abandons the terrain that would not be colonised: "My own sense is that when people at the moment call a piece of writing literary, they generally have one of five things in mind, or some combination of them." (Eagleton, 2012: 25) These are, for reference, the fictional, moral ('yields significant insight into human experience'), linguistic ('uses language in a peculiarly heightened, figurative or self-conscious way'), non-pragmatic ('not practical in the sense that shopping lists are') and normative ('highly valued as a piece of writing'); all of which he discards: "Most of the rest of this study will be devoted to illustrating how these factors fail to yield us a definition of literature, in the hope that in this process of self-deconstruction, some light will be shed on the workings of what people call literary texts. When I use terms like 'literary texts' and 'literature' in this book, incidentally, I mean what people nowadays generally regard as such things." (Eagleton, ibid.: 29)

[291] It is clear that Eagleton has kept up with Fish. He wrote an excellent article, for example, for the *London Review of Books* on Fish's *The Trouble With Principle (*1999), called 'The Estate Agent' (2000). His lack of engagement with Fish in this book, I suspect, reflects more that Eagleton is here far more interested in the ramifications of his own arguments.

[292] "When Tony Bennett [in *Formalism and Marxism* (1979)] writes that what is needed is not 'a theory of Literature, but a theory of literatures: concrete, historically specific and materialist', he speaks as a left-nominalist." (Eagleton, 2012: 15-16) And this is what I mean – that actually sounds pretty good to me, at least half-right – and, more importantly, I know Professor Bennett's work has evolved critically (see, for example, Bennett in Storey (ed.), 1997: 308, 314, footnotes 1 and 14 on 319-321; Bennett, 2013: 2). I will say this – back in 1982, Eagleton was referring to Bennett's book as 'a straw in the wind' (Eagleton, 1982: 52) yet he continues to reference it (while attributing to himself a modicum of critical distance from his own Althusserian past; Eagleton, 2012: 45). As to Eco, well, I don't think he'd care much...

[293] That the argument with Fish traverses the book (ibid.: 19-20, 39-46, 101-103, 188) and yet is only one of many concurrent arguments is an excellent example of Eagleton's style and, more importantly, strategy: "[Immanent critique...] for which a more recent name is deconstruction [...] occupies the logic of a regime (whether textual or political) from the inside in order to reveal how that system of sense is never entirely at one with itself, and how it is at its points of slippage and self-contradiction that it might begin to unravel." (ibid.: 103) In fact, Eagleton often provides discursive responses that appear to resolve multiple arguments (this in response to Eco; from language, we could productively substitute 'fiction' and 'theory' as specific cases worth examining): "To complain that one never gets outside language would be like protesting that one can never break out of one's body. Bodies and languages are ways of being in the midst of things,

rather than obstacles which shut us out from them. It is by being on the 'inside' of a body or language, not by over-leaping them as so many barriers, that we can encounter one another and intervene in what is misleadingly known as the outside world." (ibid.: 143)

[294] See also Tredell, 1994: 130, 132.

[295] It is a complicated idea that can be simply expressed – if your critical theory is ubiquitously taken up as a universally-perceived value, it stops resonating as theory; if your radical program for society succeeds, no-one will continue to see it as radical; such success is, however, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, historically prone to disastrous preconditions (and blind disavowal of their continuing consequences). Eagleton argues the dialectical irony of desirable futures: "If art is one of the ways we subdue the world to sense, or reflect on that process more generally, and if such sense-making is necessary for our survival, then the non-pragmatic is ultimately in the name of the pragmatic. Yet it may also be that the opposite is true – that historically speaking, the pragmatic (or realm of necessity) must be overtaken by the non-pragmatic (or domain of freedom). This, in a word, is the hope of Marxism. The most desirable future is one in which we would be less in thrall to practical necessity than we are at present. [...] As strategy, the work of art belongs to the realm of necessity, or at least to that somewhat less constrained area of it known as the symbolic. As sport, it prefigures the domain of freedom." (Eagleton, 2012: 179; see also Fredric Jameson's interview in *Diacritics*, 1982: 78-84, 87-88)

[296] As he says elsewhere: "[The] awareness that it is no lasting definition. [...That] ability to be ironically self-reflexive about one's position, to see its limitations, and to see that its whole identity is exhausted in realizing itself has been, I think, very valuable." (Tredell, 1994: 132-133)

[297] Eagleton puts it perfectly: "What you choose and reject theoretically, then, depends upon what you are practically trying to do. This has always been the case with literary criticism: it is simply that it is often very reluctant to realize the fact. In any academic study we select the objects and methods of procedure which we believe the most important, and our assessment of their importance is governed by frames of interest deeply rooted in our practical forms of social life. Radical critics are no different in this respect: it is just that they have a set of social priorities with which most people at present tend to disagree. This is why they are commonly dismissed as 'ideological', because 'ideology' is always a way of describing other people's interests rather than one's own." (Eagleton, 2008: 184)

[298] You could argue with some justification that a human raised in segregation (physically or, I suppose, cognitively) from other humans, without community, without language, would not develop these strategies. That would be accurate – human here describes only our social experience, not our biological determination.

[299] Eagleton prefers the Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' – 'essence is explained in grammar', by relationship, 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' (Eagleton, 2012: 20, 22, 168). For him, this suggests a particular approach to strategy, relying on Jameson; one example: "The whole paradox of what we have here called the subtext," Jameson writes, "may be summed up in this, that the literary work or cultural object, as though for the first time, brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction." (ibid.: 170) This also connects Jameson's thought implicitly to Wolfgang Iser's (ibid.: 186-188); intertextuality, as Jameson and Iser would presumably argue, goes some way towards explaining historical presences though is less prepared to interrogate historical absences. See, further, ibid.: 96, 171, 176, 192, 195, 202, 215-216, 223.

[300] He goes on: "The liberal humanist response to this question, I have suggested, is at once perfectly reasonable and, as it stands, entirely useless. Let us try to concretize it a little by asking how the reinvention of rhetoric that I have proposed (though it might equally as well be called 'discourse theory' or 'cultural studies' or whatever) might contribute to making us all better people." (Eagleton, 2008: 183; see also Jameson's 'Metacommentary' in *The Ideologies of Theory* (Jameson, 2008: 7), wherein he asks a strikingly similar question about how we relate to the 'need for interpretation')

[301] Eagleton is terrific at relating historical conditions to the developments of specific literary attitudes, genres and theories; drawing on the work of his former mentor, Raymond Williams, Eagleton notes that much of what we identify, understand or value about 'literature' has a relatively short ('selective and self-defining') history; some of it uniquely 20th-century ('what is precious about literary art is the way it renders

our taken-for-granted values freshly visible, thereby opening them to criticism and revision'), though still up for debate. See Eagleton, 2012: 89-91; see also ibid. 34-35, 93-96, 105.

[302] Eagleton covers numerous approaches other than Jameson and Iser, although as per his 'strategy' of 1983 ('why do we want to engage' is always the first question) he typically correlates them somehow. See, for example, ibid.: 177-178 on hermeneutical criticism ('reconstructing a question in order to shed light on an answer') and ibid.: 223-224 on political criticism ('It is not just a question of how certain conflicts may be resolved, but how they may be left fruitfully unresolved, or how they are treated as a whole.')

[303] I am mostly thinking here of his book *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (1981): "Since all art is rhetorical, the tasks of the revolutionary cultural worker are essentially threefold. First, to participate in the production of works and events which, within transformed 'cultural' media, so fictionalize the 'real' as to intend those effects conducive to the victory of socialism. Second, as 'critic', to expose the rhetorical structures by which non-socialist works produce politically undesirable effects, as a way of combating what [it] is now unfashionable to call false consciousness. Third, to interpret such works where possible 'against the grain', so as to appropriate from them whatever may be valuable for socialism." (Eagleton, 1981: 113) Putting aside the rhetoric (an act which the Eagleton of 1981 would naturally have rejected), his argument is effectively the one we will examine for the rest of this chapter – ways of producing, acting, reading, critiquing, that are strategic (what are their limits, how can they work). I should also note that Eagleton does not refer to Adorno's 'Commitment' in '*Walter Benjamin*' (my reading of 'Commitment' is the next key piece of theoretical work in this chapter) but clearly understands the relevant arguments of Adorno vs. Benjamin vs. Brecht (ibid.: 91-93; see also Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (2006; first published in 1976: 21-35), where he discusses commitment as a Marxist concept, and 'The Author as Producer'). He does, though, make specific reference to adopting Benjamin as strategy (1981: 41-42) – very loosely put, to reject a regression to an imaginary past (as with critics like Northrop Frye), to not be 'marooned' in the symbolic order, and to recognise new relations realisable by revolutionary practice. Later, Eagleton rejects what he interprets Adorno to be saying in 'Commitment': "So it is that Adorno comes to rehearse with a new inflection all the reactionary clichés which a committed art customarily attracts, railing at its supposed schematism and reductivism. The most profoundly political work is one that is entirely silent about politics, as for some the greatest poet is one who has never sullied his genius with anything as sordidly determinate as a poem." (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic,* 1990: 350) This leads him to conceive of 'two Adornos' (ibid.: 360) because he cannot resolve this specific rejection of commitment with Adorno's refusal (discussed below) to not give in to cynicism, to forget.

[304] Why a story? Perhaps because it works better as an 'exchange of experiences' as described in Benjamin's 'The Storyteller' (1936): "[The] art of storytelling is coming to an end. Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences. […The] earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times. What distinguishes the novel from the story (and from the epic in the narrower sense) is its essential dependence on the book." (Benjamin, 2007: 83; 87; see also Jameson, 2013: 11-12, 18, 23; and the *London Review Bookshop* podcasts on Walter Benjamin and storytelling, hosted by Gareth Evans on 07/06/2016 and 16/08/2016) Benjamin was writing a history of narrative, however fragmentary, but what he was arguing (somewhat metaphorically) was that novels are isolated experiences, incommensurable, not shared like those of storytelling. The crisis of the novel, then, is that it seeks to be 'understandable in itself', to 'inform'. (Benjamin, 2007: 87) Of a story in Herodotus, he says: "It resembles the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight and have retained their germinative power to this day." (ibid.: 89-90) This is the same argument he makes in 'Theses' regarding the necessary study of history; here he is making the claim for art. This seemed a point worth making but in a frame I didn't want to present it in, one that redacted the telling of 'The Producer', 'The Theses' and 'Commitment' to their aesthetic claims. In the end, I took my liberty from 'The Task of the Translator' (1923): "Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information – hence, something inessential. This is the hallmark of bad translation." (Benjamin, 2007: 69); and "[A] translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux." (ibid.: 80; see also Adorno, 1991: 178)

[305] I have read this essay many times over many years. Every version I read presumed Benjamin gave the speech. Gerhard Scholem claims that in fact Benjamin never gave the speech and that it was not published at the time. (Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 441)

[306] See Benjamin, 1998: 85-103.

[307] See Benjamin's 'What Is Epic Theater?' (1939), collected in *Illuminations*, 2007: 147-154; two versions of this essay (and other writings by Benjamin on Brecht) are also to be found in Anna Bostock's (trans.) compilation of Benjamin's writings on Brecht, *Understanding Brecht* (1998). Arendt/Zohn, Demetz, Bostock/Verso: these different translations reveal discrete aspects of Benjamin, contrasting visions, like the compiler who acts to salvage history, or the collector who merely scavenges from it (compare Eagleton, 1981: 60-63, to Arendt in *Illuminations*, 2007: 39-45).

[308] The argument is simple to the extent that I have simplified it – Benjamin compares 'New Objectivity' to Dada and Brecht but he also compares the reporting of Sergey Tretyakov (Sergei Tretiakov) to it, and all these against the German Activism movement as well. By including Tretyakov he locates 'a functional dependency between correct political tendency and progressive literary technique' (something he would argue, in different terms, for Brecht; Benjamin, 1998: 86, 88). The conclusions drawn by 'The Author As Producer' were, as is well known, given fuller expression, a more 'deliberately' radical emphasis, in his 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. (Benjamin, 2007: 52, 241-242)

[309] This would not have been a difficult argument for Benjamin who had reached similar conclusions in 'The Image of Proust' (1929) (see *Illuminations*, 2007: 209-210; see also its continuation in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939)). Brecht, though, would have disagreed with the simple view of critical reading as a strategy: "Brecht thinks it is impossible to turn Rimbaud's attitude – the attitude of the footloose vagabond who puts himself at the mercy of chance and turns his back upon society – into a model representation of a proletarian fighter." (Benjamin, 1998: 106)

[310] I have read a number of tellings of this part of the tale. One of the shortest and most bittersweet is Arendt's (*Illuminations*, 2007: 16-18), a compelling rumination on bad luck that casts part of its shadow on Benjamin's relationship with Adorno; she tells it very well yet I am not convinced – but then, Arendt lived through what I only read about.

[311] I'm quoting its introduction in Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 300, but Eagleton (1990) feels the same way. Arato and Gebhardt also argue that 'The Author as Producer' is an 'apology for the repressive instrumentalization of art in the Soviet Union' (ibid.: 214). Perhaps this is the case, though as Eagleton points out, citing Charles Rosen, Benjamin's actual position against 'tendency' would have been unlikely to find favour with the Soviet state (or a pro-Soviet audience) of the time (Eagleton, 1981: 174; note: Eagleton, too, thinks he gave the speech, Scholem says not). Whatever share of concerns and compromises one might have with Benjamin's support of the Soviet enterprise (up until the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939), this is not one of them.

[312] It is there in the text (Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 303): "Campaigns to prevent the staging of Brecht's plays in West Germany belong to a relatively superficial layer of political consciousness. They were not even particularly vigorous, or they would have taken much crasser forms after 13 August." (i.e. the day the Wall was put up…) See also Adorno, 1991: 79 (note: I prefer McDonagh's translation to Nicholsen's, however Nicholsen inserts the connection directly into the text, while McDonagh has it as a footnote).

[313] This, in my opinion, should not be done too easily – it is a monstrous affront to their memory, erasing the horror of what happened not only to the bodies of the dead but to their beliefs. Adorno writes (under the subtitle 'The Problem of Suffering'): "I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric; it expresses in negative form the impulse which inspires committed literature. The question asked by a character in Sartre's play *Morts sans sépulture* [or '*The Unburied Dead*'], 'Is there any meaning in life when men exist who beat people until the bones break in their bodies?', is also the question whether any art now has a right to exist; whether intellectual regression is not inherent in the concept of committed literature because of the regression of society." (Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 312) But, he adds: "Enzensberger's retort also remains true, that literature must resist this verdict, in other words, be such that its mere existence after Auschwitz is not a surrender to cynicism. Its own situation is one of paradox, not merely the problem of how to react to it. The abundance of real suffering tolerates no

forgetting […].” (ibid.) He's referring to earlier commentary in 'An Essay on Cultural Criticism and Society' (1951), later extended in *Negative Dialectics* (1966); put simply, how can the survivor go on living with their guilt. And yet, paradoxically, it has to be done – Adorno had an answer which he in 1962 considered insufficient and ahistorical; nonetheless I think it has to be applied.

[314] It's a neat way phrase, the way he puts it, but it doesn't match up with everything else he argues (as we'll arguably see): "Each of the two alternatives negates itself with the other. Committed art, necessarily detached as art from reality, cancels the distance between the two. 'Art for art's sake' denies by its absolute claims that ineradicable connection with reality which is the polemical a priori of the very attempt to make art autonomous from the real." (Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 301)

[315] "He once calmly wrote that when he was not deceiving himself, the theatre was more important to him than any changes in the world it might promote." (ibid.: 309)

[316] It is clear what kind of critique Adorno is making (he doesn't believe that art and life are separate, he doesn't believe you can be outside either one of them): "His work, with its often patent weaknesses, would not have had such power if it were not saturated with politics. Even its most questionable creations, such as *The Measures Taken*, generate an immediate awareness that issues of the utmost seriousness are at stake. To this extent, Brecht's claim that he used his theatre to make men think was justified. It is futile to try to separate the beauties, real or imaginary, of his works from their political intentions. The task of an immanent critique, which alone is dialectical, is rather to synthesize assessment of the validity of his forms with his politics." (ibid.: 309) *The Measures Taken* (1931) is an extraordinary, horrifying piece of political theatre which predicts the 'show trials' of Stalin's 'Terror' (that's how we know it, roughly 1936-1938; arguably the terror lasted until his death…), where he purged the Communist Party of itself. In the play, communist agents kill one of their own when he reveals his true face in a moment of revolutionary fervour, potentially endangering their clandestine collaboration, and then report for judgement to Moscow; the end justifying the means. Benjamin had lauded '*The Measures*' in 'The Author as Producer' in 1934 because of its didacticism (it made the audience consider their own position); Adorno's historical hindsight was that they had deceived themselves that the commitment of their art would be mirrored in life – by 1938 Stalin had slaughtered millions, and the 'trials' were merely the obscene tip of the bloody iceberg.

[317] Adorno is referring to *The Trial of Lucullus* (1951), Brecht's opera which was his first major work after returning to Germany (it originally aired as a radio play in 1940). Considering the Moscow trials, this title was perhaps too provocative (too process-oriented, anyway); it was changed to *The Judgment of Lucullus*. In any event, the text was only 'nominally emended'. The play concerns a Roman general on trial for waging a war of aggression, for his own reasons not for the State – he is condemned to nothingness. See Joy H. Calico's *Brecht At The Opera* (2008: 109-139).

[318] Adorno goes on, quoting Sartre (somewhat ambivalently): "'The work of art,' he has written, 'does not have an end; there we agree with Kant. But the reason is that it is an end.' […] It only remains to add there is no straightforward relationship between this appeal and the thematic commitment of a work." (Arato and Gebhardt (eds.), 1985: 313-314)

[319] He says it better at length: "However, the minimal promise of happiness they contain, which refuses to be traded for comfort, cannot be had for a price less than total dislocation, to the point of worldlessness. Here every commitment to the world must be abandoned to satisfy the ideal of the committed work of art – that polemical alienation which Brecht as a theorist invented, and as an artist practiced less and less as he bound himself more tightly to the role of a friend of mankind. This paradox, which might be charged with sophistry, can be supported without much philosophy by the simplest experience: Kafka's prose and Beckett's plays […] have an effect by comparison with which officially committed works look like pantomime. Kafka and Beckett arouse the fear which existentialism merely talks about." (ibid.: 314)

[320] It would be wrong to ignore the specific materialist reading – "This is why today autonomous rather than committed works of art should be encouraged in Germany." (ibid.: 317) – and yet, paradoxically, that is exactly what I'm about to do.

[321] This extract is key to the materialist reading but not to the point I'm making here (I still feel both readings are necessary): "Those who trumpet their ethics and humanity in Germany today are merely waiting for a chance to persecute those whom their rules condemn, and to exercise the same inhumanity in

practice of which they accuse modern art in theory. In Germany, commitment often means bleating what everyone is already saying or at least secretly wants to hear." (ibid.: 317)

[322] And, unlike committed art, couldn't easily be turned against its audience; it was, in fact, arguably already against its audience (irresponsible to their needs) and yet, paradoxically, could be made to be for them. See also Adorno's letter to Benjamin (August 2, 1935; Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 498): "Intrasocietally, however, this means that the mere concept of use value by no means suffices as a critique of the commodity character, but only leads back to a stage prior to the division of labor. This has always been my actual reservation about [Brecht. His…] 'collective' and […] unmediated concept of function have therefore always been suspect to me, as themselves a 'regression'. Based on these considerations, whose substance concerns exactly the categories in your precis that may conform to [his…], you will perhaps understand that my opposition to them is not an insular attempt to rescue autonomous art or anything of the kind, but rather most profoundly addresses those motifs of our philosophical friendship that I regard as basic."

[323] Eagleton's understanding of Benjamin dwarfs my own; he wrote, as it were, the book on it (allegedly the first full-length study in English; Jameson wrote, I think, the first American critical work in *Marxism and Form* (1971: 60-83); despite the wonder of what I presume were Jameson's translations, Eagleton's book is understandably more comprehensive). While reading Benjamin was clearly a significant turning point for Eagleton's work (an epistemological break from *Criticism and Ideology*, as discussed in Tredell, 1994: 130-131), his uses of Benjamin in 1981 (a complex claim for materialism against idealism; 1981: 22-24, 81-82, 115, 159) have become 'strategically integrated' in *The Event Of Literature* (see in particular: 51, 67, mainly on 'the political art of quotation'); Eagleton 30 years on has a better historical understanding, but is done with his former, adamant urgency.

[324] That Adorno's profound argument stretches far beyond its particular expression in this essay is perfectly summarised by Chris Conti's 'The Primacy of the Object: Adorno Versus Cultural Studies': "The truth of art is not without practical effects, just without the kind that can be translated into active politics. […] Art is [negative] knowledge of the social world, not the passive acceptance of objects as they come. Its truth resides in resistance to the criticism it nonetheless incites, because the criticism capable of grasping its truth is also ensnared in the same instrumentalist schemas governing the administered world. […] The goal of advanced art and philosophy is the primacy of the object: to provide accounts of the object's capacity to transcend its concept and thus offer critical models of freedom." (Conti in Marks (ed.), 2012: 112, 114, 119) Nonetheless I submit that these alternate readings of the context of 'Commitment' – and the conclusions drawn – are not meant to overemphasise Adorno's 'retreat' from Benjamin's 'tumult', only reflect on our role in achieving 'the possible' (per Conti: "Art cannot agitate its way to utopia, to the rational society of mutually respecting wills purged of violence; it can only remain a faithful bearer of the promise that such a society is possible."; ibid.: 112; see also Jameson in Taylor (ed.), 1980: 208-209).

[325] The connection is not mine – it is Arato and Gebhardt's. The fact that I think they read the essay in a too-limited fashion is not the point here; credit where it is due. Here, also, a non-chronological (asynchronous) opportunity arises to address *What Is Literature?* after 'Commitment'. Putting aside Sartre's argumentative decision to cleave an essential difference between prose and other kinds of writing and other kinds of art (Sartre, 1978: 1-13), it is easy to be sympathetic to his view and hard to fault, insomuch as the purpose of his writing is identical to the conclusions he draws. Much like Adorno's essay, in my opinion, Sartre is writing in an effort to intervene 'in his own time' and the conclusion he finally draws (ibid., 232-238; see also David Caute's introduction and passim, ibid.: xiv, xvi, 18-19) is ably demonstrated by the fact that his fourth essay 'Situation of the writer in 1947' takes up almost as much space (time, effort, insight) as the other three essays combined ('What is writing?', 'Why write?', 'For whom does one write?'). Of course (in my opinion), he is wrong to conclude: "A book has its absolute truth within the age [in which it was written]." (ibid., 235) People perhaps but literature, art, memory (and the mechanisms by which we remember people, art, literature) can be, as per Benjamin and to paraphrase Sartre, 're-written', and that is an equally absolute truth. By way of demonstration, the very first of Sartre's numerous footnotes provides a relevant example for this thesis: "At least in general. The greatness and error of Klee lie in his attempt to make a painting both sign and object." (ibid.: 23) Adorno's 'Commitment' could be a response to that one line alone; it is testament to the rigour of both works that it is not.

[326] For a thoughtful history of the 'new angel', see Alex Danchev's essay 'The angel of history' in *International Affairs*, (2014: 367–377). The speculative argument (ibid.: 376-377) that the 'angel' of 1920 (when *Angelus Novus* was painted) may have been modelled on Hitler not the Kaiser, regardless of its bona

fides, is a warning, again, that 'even the dead will not be safe', and furthermore that we must choose; that we must speak or be spoken for. See also Djerassi in the *New York Review of Books* (25/09/2014), to which I can only add, at this late stage, that the truly significant question is not of Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's painting (as if 'incorrectly' interpreting the painting somehow changes the meaning of what Benjamin wrote) but of how we see history, an interpretation arguably demonstrated by the debate.

[327] The letter to Gretel Adorno discussed above seems to suggest that the Adornos and Benjamin were talking about it in person (in a different form) back in 1937. There is also ample evidence of the ideas of the theses appearing in other published material (even if not published during his lifetime). Here's one example: in a letter from Benjamin to Adorno (written in Paris, 09/12/1938): "What particularly appealed to me about your essay's conclusion is the note of reservation you sound at the concept of progress. You at first justify this reserve only in passing and by referring to the history of the term. I would really like to get at its roots and its origins. But I cannot conceal the difficulties of this from myself." (Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 591; also Lonitz (ed.) and Walker (trans.), 2001: 295. The broader discussion which informed Adorno's 'Commitment' can also be seen in this letter and elsewhere in their correspondence; Adorno's letter to Benjamin dated 18/03/1936, for example (Taylor (ed.), 1980: 121-122, 140, 146-150).

[328] Benjamin's dream (28/06/1938), recorded in '*Reflections*' (Demetz (ed.), 1986: 212): "I found myself in a labyrinth of staircases. This labyrinth was not everywhere roofed. I climbed up; other stairways led downward. On one landing I found myself standing on a summit. A wide prospect opened across the country. I saw others standing on other peaks. One of these people was suddenly gripped by vertigo and plunged down. The giddiness spread; other people now fell from other summits into the depths. When I, too, was seized by this feeling, I woke up."

[329] Reading Brecht in this way is presumably mildly controversial; I would argue his ambivalence, the conflict beneath his slavish support for the USSR and international communism, is papered over in many accounts (ironically enough, usually in service of justifying its criticism). In June, 1938, when Benjamin published 'The Country where it is Forbidden to Mention the Proletariat' (the same month he arrived at Brecht's house to stay for the last time), he was championing the power of Brecht to counter the lies of the Third Reich, yet arguably, using language which predicts the language of the 'Theses' (see Benjamin, 1998: 41) and prefigures their potential disillusionment. In a letter (July 20, 1938), Benjamin subsequently wrote: "As for Brecht, he is trying his best to make sense of what is behind Russian cultural politics by speculating on what the politics of nationality in Russia requires. But this obviously does not prevent him from recognizing that the theoretical line being taken is catastrophic for everything we have championed for twenty years. As you know, Tretyakov was his translator and friend. He is most probably no longer alive." (Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 572) By August, Benjamin had become even more cognisant of the ambivalence/conflict of his and Brecht's commitment (Demetz (ed.),1986: 218-219); that their horror of fascism was beginning to also apply, by degree, to their experience of Stalinist communism is, I think, an argument worthy of further exploration. See also the letter of October 4, 1938 (Scholem and Adorno (eds.), 1994: 576), and compare the changes in attitude of Brecht – complicit, cynical, thwarted, tortured – in Benjamin's diary entries of 6 July and 31 August, 1934, with 28 June, and 1, 25, and 26 July, 1938 (Benjamin, 1998: 108, 111, 115, 116, 118, 119).

[330] The argument deserves our full attention: "Benjamin also thought this about works of art. In his view, the meaning of a work of art is something that evolves over time. Great poems and novels are like slow-burning fuses. As they enter into new, unpredictable situations, they begin to release new meanings that the author himself could not have foreseen, any more than Goethe could have foreseen commercial television. [...] With the privilege of hindsight, we can inscribe these events in a broader narrative [...and while there] is no way we can use this knowledge to undo past catastrophes [...] we are not entirely impotent. It is up to us to ensure that Michelangelo and Thomas Mann, say, did not belong to a race that ended up destroying itself. They themselves, being dead, are powerless to prevent that tragic denouement, whereas we are not. We can make a difference to their stories. We cannot undo the fate of those in the past who fought for justice and were murdered for their pains. But we can rewrite their narratives by our own actions in the present, and even give them a classical happy ending." (Eagleton, 2009)

[331] Hurley's argument (to selectively quote her) is muddy and complex: "When we go out looking for stories we are, I think, in many ways going in search of ourselves, trying to find understanding of our lives, and the people around us. [...] But ignoring half of it, and pretending there's only one way a woman lives or has ever lived – in relation to the men that surround her – is not a single act of erasure, but a political erasure.

Populating a world with men, with male heroes, male people, and their 'women, cattle and slaves' is a political act. You are making a conscious choice to erase half the world. As storytellers, there are more interesting choices we can make." (Hurley, 2013)

[332] Harold Bloom as interviewed by Antonio Weiss in 'The Art of Criticism No. 1' in *The Paris Review*, Spring 1991, no. 118. This is not as casual a connection as it might seem – I'm actually responding to Eagleton's claim: "Bloom's aesthetics represent an impoverishment of Benjamin's politics. […Bloom] is as a 'latecomer' who has emptied out the revolutionary vision of his precursor and put the feeble tessara of literary history defensively in its place." (Eagleton, 1981: 47) Later I read Bloom's *How To Read And Why* (first published in 2000) and Eagleton's *How To Read Literature* (2013), and found Eagleton's book to be the more practical introduction to literary criticism (discussing character, narrative, interpretation etc.) and eschewing political critique (literally echoing Hoggart, 1995: 173): "My concern here is to provide readers and students with some of the basic tools of the critical trade, without which they are unlikely to be able to move on to other matters." (Eagleton, 2013: ix-x) Bloom's was effectively the opposite (from within the individualistic confines of his beliefs, yet predicting that argument I had also read in Eagleton, and before him Williams, breaking away from Richards and Leavis; Williams, 1977: 245, 254): "How […individuals] read, well or badly, and what they read, cannot depend wholly upon themselves, but why they read must be for and in their own interest […] You cannot directly improve anyone else's life by reading better or more deeply. I remain skeptical of the traditional social hope that care for others may be stimulated by the growth of individual imagination […]." (Bloom, 2001: 21-22) Thus, an ending.

[333] Why? Probably because he said this: "What you say in passing or what you expound because you know it too well, because it really bores you, but you feel you have to get through this in order to make your grand point, that's what people pick up on. That's what they underline. That's what they quote. That's what they attack, or cite favorably. That's what they can use." (Weiss and Bloom, 1991) I should also note that in '*How To Read*', Bloom contrasts irony with ideology (briefly: 'ideology destroys our capacity to apprehend and appreciate irony; we must recover the ironic') which, ironically, simply demonstrates Bloom's blindness to Eagleton's insight that 'ideology is always a way of describing other people's interests rather than one's own'.

[334] See also Plotz, 2011: 24, 26.

[335] He was addressing the Senior Class in Divinity College at Cambridge, July 15, 1838. Neither of us have been entirely fair to Emerson. The words he spoke were ones of a faith that as far as I can tell, neither Bloom nor I share. In general, you could argue that Bloom's Emerson is the one found in *Society and Solitude* under 'Books' (1875: 170-196), with its greater share of vaunted lists of authors, whereas I am drawn to a few lines of 'Success' and its readers who bring their own interpretation and find their own value (1875: 264-265, 276-277).

❧

[336] This is 'The Author as Producer' again but here Benjamin, while extolling the virtues of Tretyakov and the Soviet newspaper, says something more relevantly read alongside China Miéville, social media and Jameson: "Let me give an example of the unfruitfulness of such contrasts and of the process of their dialectical resolution. […] 'In our literature,' writes an author of the Left, 'contrasts which, in happier epochs, used to fertilize one another have become insoluble antinomies. Thus, science and belles lettres, criticism and original production, culture and politics now stand apart from one another without connection or order of any kind. […] There is however a dialectical factor hidden in this situation: […] For as literature gains in breadth what it loses in depth, so [too] the distinction between author and public […]. The reader is always prepared to become a writer, in the sense of being one who describes or prescribes. As an expert – not in any particular trade, perhaps, but anyway an expert on the subject of the job he happens to be in – he gains access to authorship. […] Authority to write is no longer founded in a specialist training but in a polytechnical one, and so becomes common property. In a word, the literarization of living conditions becomes a way of surmounting otherwise insoluble antinomies, and the place where the words is most debased […] becomes the very place where a rescue operation can be mounted.'" (Benjamin, 1998: 90; note: Benjamin is, in fact, the 'author of the Left' he himself quotes)

[337] The book is, predictably, about an author (unpredictably, an Australian), although it takes the form of eight 'lessons' (it forms around the lessons or lectures or defences, it might be better to say; Coetzee began telling these stories at public events in lieu of traditional lectures). The first lesson, which starts with these words, is entitled 'Realism'. (See also Wood, 2003; Lodge, 2003; as per Benjamin above, be sure to read into the commentary of Wood's review, where he responds to letters written in complaint.)

[338] See, by way of a fake example, Balzac's use of them as a narrative device, as discussed by Adorno in 'On an Imaginary Feuilleton'. (Adorno, 1992: 32-39)

[339] There is always an argument to be made. Marx, for example, has often been asked to carry 'the weight of literature' (of which he was a far more 'assiduous reader' than commentator). Certainly, to return to the discussion of Benjamin and Brecht (and from them Eagleton), none of the aesthetic arguments considered by them appear unknown to Marx (see Baxandall and Morawski (eds.), 1973: 30-35, 45-47, 105, 115, 119, 150-151). Yet neither could they be called his own (and the tendentious class or social realist 'literature' of the communisms of the 20th century have only the most fraught or tangential relationship to his writing on the subject). Still, as Morawski notes, there are still, always, lessons to be learned: "The achievement of homo aestheticus could be anticipated, Marx thought, but a radical socio-political change in the situation of the species would be required. In this particular sense, the artist had to make a choice. Would he bemuse himself in an ivory tower, or participate in revolutionary progress by accepting its vicissitudes?" (ibid.: 46); "Needless to say, they could not lift themselves above the horizon of their time which defined the decisive issue for them. In this sense, their sympathy for realism is symptomatic – and yet, I must add, nowhere in their work did Marx and Engels declare themselves against any alternative methods and solutions for art." (ibid.: 46-47) On balance, there is little of Kant, Hegel or Marx I could apply directly here and less sense in doing so. Adorno, perhaps, could possibly be of more use in mediation; on the future of novels, for example, I was struck by his description of a visit to a book fair where he realised with profound horror that books were being printed with pictures on their covers – and therefore, to him, no longer looked like books (Adorno, 1992: 21-22).

[340] See also the utopian 'response' to this quandary, repeated in Jameson, 2005: xii and passim.

[341] Self's reading of the postmodern is radically depoliticised (a not uncommon experience of it), an aesthetics shorn of ideology. To that end, its use here with Jameson is more by way of contrast than direct comparison (or contradiction in need of resolution…): "In the late 20th century, a culture typified by a consumerist ethic was convinced that it – that we – could have it all. This 'having it all' was even ascribed its own cultural era: the postmodern. We weren't overtaken by new technologies, we simply took what we wanted from them and collaged these fragments together, using the styles and modes of the past as a framework of ironic distancing: hence the primacy of the message was reasserted over its medium." (Self, 2014) In its arrested development, the postmodern remains an open moment of productive debate. See Aravamudan, 2011; Plotz, 2011.

[342] See Stock, 1996: 69, as previously noted. It is a very odd view for Self to put, following McLuhan ('such a change of modes of awareness is always delayed by the persistence of older patterns of perception') along the line to post-novelty: expecting future generations to think of us as modern/modernist/postmodernist, rather than their equivalent of the Dark Ages, seems somewhat misguided.

[343] As Carrière said: "Our education is the result of filtering that took place before our time. As you have reminded us, that is the nature of culture. But we can of course challenge these filters, as we frequently do. […] Our past, therefore, is not set in stone. Nothing is more alive than the past." (Carrière and Eco, 2012: 84-85).

[344] That the critique and the periodising impulse are never far apart is commented upon by Jameson in '*The Antinomies*': "Roland Barthes took a wiser and more prudent position on the matter: 'When it comes to the 'modern,' you can only carry out tactical-style operations: at certain times you feel it's necessary to intervene to signal some shift in the landscape or some new inflection in modernity.' But his own experience, to be sure, expressed the preoccupations of the post-war period, in which, in what I have called the 'late modern', the effort to theorize and to name what had happened in the first half of the twentieth century became a dominant theoretical ambition." (Jameson, 2013: 11)

[345] Self nevertheless has a number of intriguing insights about the novel form: "The use of montage for transition; the telescoping of fictional characters into their streams of consciousness; the abandonment of the omniscient narrator; the inability to suspend disbelief in the artificialities of plot – these were always latent in the problematic of the novel form, but in the early 20th century, under pressure from other, juvenescent, narrative forms, the novel began to founder. The polymorphous multilingual perversities of the later Joyce, and the extreme existential asperities of his fellow exile, Beckett, are both registered as authentic responses to the taedium vitae of the form, and so accorded tremendous, guarded respect – if not affection." (Self, 2014)

[346] And his stipulation of serious novels, of course, reveals an equally obvious (self-cancelling) contradiction, which we can put in Le Guin's terms – why do we think everybody should read 'serious' novels; or comic books, or speak in Latin? Self is right about the future of the serious novel because it is also the present and the past. However, the seriousness with which readers take the novels of their choosing, e.g. *Harry Potter,* seems in relatively good health.

[347] After making my initial decision to not follow McLuhan (in a theoretical sense) for this thesis, I was bemused to find, while reading the OECD's *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, that they had named their report after him: "'In the age of electricity and automation, the globe becomes a community of continuous learning, a single campus in which everybody irrespective of age, is involved in learning a living.' Marshall McLuhan, 1964" (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005: 3) This inclusion seemed, and still seems, utterly bizarre to me as an OECD slogan, as it came from a now relatively obscure publication by McLuhan called *Counterblast* (an updating of Wyndham Lewis's modernist magazine *Blast*), originally published in 1954 and reworked and reissued (post-celebrity) in 1969 (see McLuhan, 1970: 41; I could find no reference to a 1964 edition, though; see also McLuhan, 2011). McLuhan's text is deliberately antagonistic to any straightforward reading, being punctuated with poetic slogans laid out in a cornucopia of styles and fonts and arrangements (in one sense, it is a deliberate attempt to communicate 'the medium is the message'; how successfully is debatable). Despite the wealth of deliberate inscrutability the book contains, it does occasionally raise interesting points: "Nothing studied in depth can remain partitioned off as a subject in a curriculum." (ibid.: 37), "Faced with information overload, we have no alternative but pattern-recognition." (ibid.: 132), etc., but it ends with a headline (which I have laid out in the manner intended) well worth debating past what I presume are its sketchy connotations for McLuhan:

THE
IVORY TOWER
BECOMES
THE CONTROL TOWER
OF
HUMAN NAVIGATION

(McLuhan, 1970: 143)

We do know what he meant by it, insomuch as he talked about in *Playboy* (March, 1969): "If we persist, however, in our conventional rearview-mirror approach [note: another persistent McLuhanism] to these cataclysmic developments, all of Western culture will be destroyed and swept into the dustbin of history. If literate Western man were really interested in preserving the most creative aspects of his civilization, he would not cower in his ivory tower bemoaning change but would plunge himself into the vortex of electric technology and, by understanding it, dictate his new environment — turn ivory tower into control tower. But I can understand his hostile attitude, because I once shared his visual bias." McLuhan, I think, has to be confronted with Benjamin here (quite aside from what could charitably be called an overstatement of the central figuration of the academic): the creative aspects of our culture cannot be separated from the horrors, the barbarism, that accompanied them (and the unremitting toil), an understanding and inheritance of which can only – only – be transformed by a critical reinscription of the past.

[348] This has a lineage: Read's *New Scientist* article 'Atrophied Muscles and Empty Art' (1964), published in Calder (ed.) *The World In 1984* (1966), quoted by Hoggart in 'Two Ways Of Looking' (1966), collected in *Speaking To Each Other (Volume One)*; thus: Hoggart, 1970a: 107. Hoggart responds: "[It] is too out-and-out. It hasn't looked round closely enough". I found later that Hoggart returned to this quote towards the end of *The Tyranny of Relativism* (2008: 335), with a softer censure – 'Read had earned the right to voice his gloom'. I also went back to the original article Read wrote, which I found instructive because amongst all

the predictions that didn't come true ('no cinemas because everyone watches television, betting shops in every street, young people dancing like dervishes to jazz bands'), he said one beautiful and very true thing: "We have to live art if we would be affected by art." (Read, *New Scientist*, vol. 22, no. 391, 14/05/64: 429)

[349] Fleissner (2011: 11-13) considers the relationship of the novel to other comparable, contemporary media, via 'the novelistic', an argument also taken up by Bewes: "the novel is a logic, a structure of problematicity that is not limited to works conventionally understood to be novels". (Bewes, 2011: 18) As discussed throughout, this is a key element of 'the future of the novel', that it has to be considered within 'the future of narrative fiction'. There is a postscript here too, though: that the theorisation of this as such, following Rooney along the lines of Marjorie Levinson's question of an anti-formal 'New Formalism', Peter Galison's grounding concept of 'specific theory' and D.A. Miller's argument over the ambitions of 'close reading', is that the implication of the novelistic is that instead of 'writing over' the language of a text, 'refashioning it', future theorists may be impelled to communicate in the specific language of the text, "to identify and combine with it" (Rooney, 2011: 29). Will the unbinding of form and content be likewise recognised in its theorisation, reset to zero (and one), as coming out of digital texts from within and not at them from without?

[350] Of course it's not everything and it is definitely not a matter of free choice in a consumer market, and there is, moreover, undoubtedly a massive inequality in terms of access, but it is nonetheless both the potential of the internet and how it's perceived that I'm referring to. That there are genuine struggles over a communal future (net neutrality, open architecture, open source) alongside significant technological developments (wireless, the internet of things, the 'cloud') and attempts being made to appropriate and create spaces for aesthetic and social uses (social media, podcasts, wikis; it is certainly more nascent and trace-like in some places than others), raises the question even if there is as yet no answer.

[351] Arguably the dialectic can be realised not only as a method by which human experience can be understood but as being at the heart of the very nature of that experience as well. In keeping with this, the claims against which a 'post-autonomous literature' (Alonso, 2011) are set (literature as succession, as transhistorical human truth, as revealing the ambivalent nature of language, as critique), Plotz 'reclaims', perhaps naively, as universalised (but only in their generic, inverted, non-individualised capacity; as with my feelings over the 'uses of literature'): "The novel […] thrives on its negative capability – its unwillingness, even its inability, to provide definitive answers to the questions it poses. The novel has soldiered on as a set of questions, of open-ended experiments, rather than definitive results. Novels, like viruses, have all the appearances of a set of plausible answers – all the appearances, that is, but the answers themselves. Novels are questions posed as if they were answers. They clarify exactly how hard such judgment can be, and how contingent and provisional our explanations of past events and predictions for future ones will always be, no matter how certain we are about the abstract rules that guide our lives." (Plotz, 2011: 23)

[352] Even thrillers like the *Millennium* books or the Robert Langdon novels centre on conspiracies that illustrate how the world is other than it is assumed to be; this may make for exciting reading but it also arguably betrays a certain amount of anti-realist(ic) disquiet amongst the readership. That said, and perhaps it's too pat, but presumably the resolution/closure of such fictions, not unlike *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, with the world returning to 'the way it should be', highlights the continuing influence of realism, even if it is only the assumed influence of 'what the reading market will bear'. See, contrarily, its alternating 'emergent and broken-down' divisions, e.g. Zadie Smith's 'lyrical realism', James Wood's 'hysterical realism', Nancy Armstrong's 'domestic realism' etc. (Wood, 2000; Wood, 2001; Smith, 2008; Armstrong, 2011: 8-10; Miéville, 2012)

[353] Another Jamesonian term – 'the object of study' "is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it". (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 2002: x; see also, 'Metacommentary' in *The Ideologies of Theory*, 2008: 5-19)

[354] Jameson completes the final chapter of *The Antinomies of Realism*, on the historical novel, with a discussion of David Mitchell's immensely popular *Cloud Atlas* (2004), a novel of six stories which deliberately, decisively, imaginatively link the past to the future. I can't think of a better example to describe the contradictory, censoring impulse which intuits realism against speculative fiction. Jameson writes: "To read the present as history, as so many have urged us to do, will mean adopting a Science-Fictional perspective of some kind, and we are fortunate to have at least one recent novel which, against all expectations, gives us an idea of what that might look like." (Jameson, 2013: 211) It is curious, though, that

at the beginning of '*Antinomies*' (ibid.: 6), Jameson lists all the binary oppositions realism is arrayed against – romance, epic, melodrama, idealism, naturalism, socialist realism and the oriental tale – and doesn't add the speculative, for which he himself is a pre-eminent critic and theorist (see *Archaeologies of the Future*, 2005); it's barely present: he specifies fantastic fiction as being seen as aberrant on the next page, sidesteps it casually on page 15, and, finally, rehashes a P.K. Dick story on pages 143-144, under the diametrical idioms of SF and paraliterature (his term from *Postmodernism*). Perhaps it is a sign that there is a stronger current, critical appreciation for overlap over opposition?

[355] What are the antinomies of realism? Jameson exhausts them fervently over several hundred pages but he begins with some, central to the thesis: "If it is social truth or knowledge we want from realism, we will soon find that what we get is ideology; if it is beauty or aesthetic satisfaction we are looking for, we will quickly find that we have to do with outdated styles or mere decoration (if not distraction). And if it is history we are looking for – either social history or the history of literary forms – then we are at once confronted with questions about the uses of the past and even the access to it which, as unanswerable as they may be, take us well beyond literature and theory and seem to demand an engagement with our own present." (ibid.: 8-9)

[356] Which is also the formal realism argument we have inherited from Watt (Watt, 2000: 32-34, 294; McKeon, 1988: 1-2). Jameson makes claims here that even if I entirely agreed with him, I'm not sure I would have the courage to say so: "From a dialectical standpoint it is not hard to see why this is so. Both sociology and aesthetics are superannuated forms of thinking and inquiry, inasmuch as neither society nor what is called cultural or aesthetic experience are in this present of time stable substances that can be studied empirically and analyzed philosophically. History, meanwhile, if it is anything at all, is at one with the dialectic, and can only be the problem of which it claims to be the solution." (Jameson, 2013: 9)

[357] Which is to say they prefer their realism fictional. Any reading which finds its end in ideology (or recognises itself as distraction, or demands an engagement with their own present, for example), and this could be anyone or everyone's experience, short-circuits the sense that it is fictional.

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[358] The date commemorates the alleged death date of Shakespeare and Cervantes in 1616; alleged because Cervantes is believed to have died on April 23 of the Gregorian Calendar, and Shakespeare on the same day of the Julian Calendar (Armstrong, 2008). Note: since 2000, WIPO, who became an agency of the UN in 1974, has organised and celebrated World IP Day on April 26.

[359] On the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day 2014, Director-General Irina Bokova wrote: "UNESCO is leading from the front in the new debates about the dematerialization of books and the rights of authors. By championing copyright and open access, UNESCO stands up for creativity, diversity and equal access to knowledge." (UNESCO, 2014b)

[360] The events in Cairo and Timbuktu both happened while I was working on the thesis. I was particularly troubled at the time by this comment: "Seydou Traoré, who has worked at the Ahmed Baba Institute since 2003, and fled shortly before the rebels arrived, said only a fraction of the manuscripts had been digitised. 'They cover geography, history and religion. We had one in Turkish. We don't know what it said.' He said the manuscripts were important because they exploded the myth that 'black Africa' had only an oral history. 'You just need to look at the manuscripts to realise how wrong this is.'" (Harding, 2013; for more, see the Tombouctou Manuscripts Project, 2016. See on Baghdad: Burkeman, 2003; see on Cairo: AP, 2011; see generally Carrière and Eco, 2012: 253-261, 6) Well over 100,000 people were killed in armed conflict in 2014, the highest annual count in 20 years. Almost 60 million people were in forced displacement in 2015, the most in 70 years, the most since the United Nations was formed. Looking forward to 2030, up to 62% of the world's people living in extreme poverty will also be living in regions at risk of high levels of violence. It could be said, without any significant inaccuracy, that war and poverty and illiteracy are, practically speaking, all part of the same problem. Attempts to fixing any of them could help fix all of them. (UNESCO, 2016d: 97, 103, 106)

[361] There is an irony worth noting here. The Obama Administration in 2015, in conjunction with the major publishers in the US, arranged to have $250 million-worth of free ebooks made available, via an app, to

'young, low-income readers'. However, as a large percentage (between 40%-50%) of low-income families have neither the internet nor a computer, the Administration is thus forced to rely on libraries to make these ebooks available, "running a program in more than 30 cities and counties to give every student a library card" (Turner, 2015).

[362] See, by way of exception, Hartley in Owen (ed.), 2008b: 141-142.

[363] In mid-2015, the European Commission began an antitrust investigation of Amazon, along the lines of the one that entangled the 'Big Five'. As of late 2016 the EC and Amazon are still in settlement discussions; for their part, Amazon continue to claim that their deals with publishers are 'in the best interests of readers' (Dwyer, 2015; Drozdiak, 2016). Meanwhile, Apple has begun to pay out their settlement of $400 million-worth of reimbursement for ebooks sold at the 'agency' prices; the reimbursement takes the form of credits at the e-retailers involved – hence, for most people, at Amazon (Chappell, 2016; Solon, 2016).

[364] J.M. Coetzee recently wrote about critical literacy, in a foreword to John Higgins's book Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa (2013), despairing of the effects of decades of neoliberal and technocratic approaches in higher education: "[The] claim that only the full apparatus of a humanistic education can produce critical literacy seems to me hard to sustain [however], since it is always open to the objection: if critical literacy is just a skill or set of skills, why not just teach the skill itself?" (Coetzee, 2013) While Coetzee was fully supportive of Higgins's defence of the Humanities, he remained pessimistic in 'a world in which universities have redefined themselves out of existence' (in his words, obviously). Nonetheless, as with Le Guin and the question of 'Why should we think everybody ought to read?', Coetzee provides a (counter)measure of response to his own concern. As Terry Eagleton puts it: "The idea that literacy is simply a skill or set of techniques is quite absurd, considering what in principle it opens up – a whole range of capacities, a whole series of practices. [It is…] absolutely right to stress that literacy is the sine qua non of any democratic situation." (Higgins and Eagleton, 2000) Beginning with critical literacy, whatever it is called ('Freshman Composition', to use Coetzee's example), opens up everything else. The real measure of its success is whether it is pursued further than 'in principle', and whether it can be extended to everyone, regardless of formal education. To achieve this it may well have to be brought down from its ivory tower and into the tumult.

[365] In 2014, Penguin Random House brought back Pelican Books, their non-fiction line that ran from 1937-1990. The advertisement on their website claims: "Sign in and read anywhere, on any device / Beautiful, easy and comfortable to read / Highlight and share passages / Bonus: Footnotes that work like a charm". As it turns out, the footnotes actually work like hypertext. (Laity, 2014; Pelican Books, 2016) Taking their cue from the Japanese and Amazon models discussed in the speculative section, perhaps, Penguin have also recently offered up Subway Reads NY. These are free ebooks, mostly excerpts, to be shared by commuters on the New York subway (or potentially anywhere) and organised on their website by the amount of time they take to read. Of course, as noted, this is not a novel idea. Yet. (Penguin Random House, 2016; Barron, 2016)

[366] See also Žižek's 'Answers Without Questions' in *The Idea Of Communism 2: The New York Conference* (2013: 177-205).

[367] UNESCO and the OECD continue to partner for positive change, recently agreeing "to develop a literacy assessment framework to underpin a short standardized adult literacy assessment that will be linked to the PIAAC scale, while being adapted to the context of each country" (UNESCO, 2016d: 282). We are, I think, moving closer to understanding what is really being measured and what is not; we are, I hope, moving closer to understanding what those measurements mean, what we could make of them, in other words.

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