

Articulations of Value in the Humanities: The Contemporary Neoliberal University and Our Victorian Inheritance

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Abstract

This thesis traces the shift from liberal to neoliberal education from the nineteenth century to the present day, in order to provide a rich and previously underdeveloped narrative of value in higher education in England. Rather than attempting to justify the value of the humanities within the presiding economic frameworks, or writing a defence against market rationalism, this thesis offers an original contribution through an immersion in historical, financial, and critical debates concerning educational policy. Drawing upon close reading and discursive analysis, this thesis constructs a nuanced map of the intersections of value in the humanities. The discussion encompasses an exploration of policymaking practices, scientific discourse, mediated representations, and public cultural life.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. The introductory chapter outlines the overarching methodology by defining the contemporary period of this project (2008-14), establishing relevant scholarship, and drawing out the correspondences between the nineteenth century and the present day. Chapter one establishes a history of the Payment by Results approach in policymaking, first established in the Revised Code of Education (1862) and recently re-introduced in the reforms of the *Browne Report* (2010). Understanding the predominance of such short-term and quantitative policy is essential for detailing how value is articulated. Chapter two reconsiders the two cultures debate. In contrast to the misrepresentative, yet pervasive, perception that the sciences and the humanities are fundamentally in opposition, I propose a more nuanced history of these disciplines. Chapter three addresses fictional representations of the humanities within literature in order to establish a vantage point from which to assess alternative routes for valuation beyond economic narratives. The final chapter scrutinises the rise of the impact criterion within research assessment and places it within a wider context of market-led cultural policy (1980-90s). This thesis argues that reflecting on Victorian legacies of economism and public accountability enables us to reconsider contemporary valuation culture in higher education. This analytical framework is of benefit to future academic studies interested in the marketisation and valuation of culture, alongside literary studies that focus on the relationship between higher education, the individual, and the state.

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To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places — and there are so many — where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Preface

This thesis was motivated by the changes to higher education that took place during my time as an undergraduate student (2009-12). It was a period of rapid transformation and uncertainty within universities in England. Public debate was dominated by a reappraisal of the economics of education. How much should tuition cost? Who would pay for it? Who benefits from universities? Within the context of the shifting ownership of student debt and the reconsideration of research assessment criteria, little attention was being paid to a far more important question: what is the value of a university education? This thesis arose from the belief that the notion of value should not always have to be measured in economic terms. The foundations for this project were established in 2012, as I began to research the extent to which alternative languages of value were being subsumed by the econocratic rhetoric of higher education policy.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* acknowledges education as a fundamental means through which to achieve “understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups” (UN General Assembly art. 26). These are qualities that are nurtured by a liberal education. Recent policy has overlooked the ways in which the humanities contribute to “the wellbeing of our society” (*Browne Report* 25) through their critically, culturally, and historically aware practices. In present policy, the value of higher education is defined by the creation of profit instead of the cultivation of people. Personally witnessing the changes in higher education from 2008-14 made this neoliberal approach explicit. I found myself wondering, how did we get from liberal education to neoliberal education?

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, capitalist realism has successfully installed a 'business ontology' in which it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business [...] emancipatory politics must destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible attainable.

Mark Fisher *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2009) 17

This thesis responds to the proposition that the value of higher education can be reduced to a singular scale: the market. Higher education policy between 2008-14 reformed both the management and financing of higher education in England through adopting a “business ontology” (Fisher 17). The Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (2009-10), known as the Browne Review, concluded that universities “must persuade students that they should ‘pay more’ in order to ‘get more’. The money will follow the student” (Browne 4). Under these conditions, a university degree became a product valued at the level of the individual consumer. Increasingly, the value of research has also been configured primarily as an asset to economic growth, an indicator of the competitiveness of a university, or in terms of its demonstrable impact. The language of the Research Excellence Framework (REF henceforth) conceives of disciplinary departments as “units of assessment” and scholarly writing as an “output” that can be attributed a star rating. This project sets out to understand how the wider values of the humanities can be articulated within this econocratic context. In order to achieve this,

this thesis outlines how the present rhetoric and rationale has come to overshadow alternative approaches to valuation.

I propose that if scholars hope to address the changes occurring in the contemporary academy, they need to better articulate the value of the humanities *beyond* the marketplace of higher education. Therefore, rather than writing a singular defence of the humanities against economic rationalism, this thesis proposes a kaleidoscopic range of ways in which value is manifested, each of which offers a different perspective on the present debate. Placing contemporary neoliberal higher education within a history of liberal education reveals that “what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be mere contingency” (Fisher 17). I place narratives of value in humanities scholarship between 2008-14 in dialogue with nineteenth-century debates concerning liberal education, in order to demonstrate that the *way* value is articulated is as significant as *what* values are articulated. This thesis addresses the following broad research questions, while at each stage specifically exploring the contextual and historical contingencies of value: what are the differences between liberal and neoliberal education? How can critically reading policy help scholars understand a culture of economism? How does debate between the humanities and the sciences create meaning? How can fiction act as a reflective tool for articulating value? How are the academic humanities connected to other cultural institutions? These questions map directly onto the chapters of this thesis.

In the words of Toni Morrison, “definitions belong to the definers — not the defined” (190). With this in mind, this thesis emphasises how self-articulation of what it is that the humanities directly ‘do’ can enrich the debate. My contribution pragmatically traces how the value of the humanities is expressed in the daily actions, language, and experiences of higher education. I argue that focusing on

what scholars say, what they do, and how they articulate the value of their work, reveals what policy neglects. Throughout, this thesis favours the word 'articulate' in place of 'justify'. The semantic distinction between these two terms is outlined in Poul Holm et al.'s *World Humanities Report 2015*:

by articulating, we mean explaining and differentiating the [...] values or benefits humanities research is thought to have [...] justifying the humanities is subtly different as it involves defending the humanities in the face of a challenge. Unlike articulation, justification is self-consciously rhetorical. There are potentially hostile audiences to consider, for instance: politicians nervous of their budgets; people who consider STEM subjects worth funding but struggle to see the point of the humanities. (38-39)

Articulating value through a demonstration of humanities practices resists being coerced into a defensive position against economics. Despite recent policy that encourages higher education to be entirely motivated by outcomes, fiscal targets, and the acquisition of employability skills, the humanities continue to inspire and aspire beyond these limits. Who should define the humanities? Where do we draw the lines of disciplinary definition? How do *our* humanities differ from institutional definitions in the past? The challenge is how to articulate value, rather than to defend and define, the humanities within the context of the market.

Therefore, I suggest that it is necessary to pursue not just one but many alternative routes to the valuation of the humanities. The four chapters of this thesis each present a different route and representation of value. This heterogeneity is appropriate given that the work of the humanities is multi-faceted. As the pluralised

word “humanities” indicates, there is not one study of “humanity”. This thesis considers a series of diverse relationships which, when considered together, create a collage of mutually reinforcing values. In doing so, I follow my belief that the humanities must embrace non-hierarchical and open-ended practices. An articulation of the value of the humanities encompasses the lives, ideas, and values of people as opposed to their instrumental use as products.

1.0 Literature Review

I am not the first to argue that economic value is a poor measurement of the benefit of the humanities, both in terms of teaching and research. The value of the humanities has been studied across a wide range of academic disciplines including critical theory, literary and cultural studies, history, education, and sociology. This thesis draws upon scholarship from several disciplines in order to connect philosophical debates with political effects and to develop a critical approach to articulating educational value. As a result, this study is indebted to the work of Matthew Arnold, Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu as well as others within the tradition of critical theory. Beyond these essential touchstones, the contemporary culture of the marketisation of value in higher education in England and in the US has led to a recent proliferation of specialist scholarship. The following section outlines three key research communities: critical university studies, defences of the public value of the humanities, and social impact studies.

1.1 Critical University Studies

Jeffrey Williams coined the term 'critical university studies' in 2012. Writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Williams defined a field that focused "on the consequences of corporate methods and goals" and "scrutinize[s] central social institutions" ("Deconstructing Academe" 7). Critical university studies interrogate the management of institutions and uncover the effects of systems that promote economic valuation culture. Williams identifies how the approach was instigated in Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins* (1996) and Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie's *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University*

(1997), both of which critique the marketisation of higher education in the US context using similar methods. More recently the focus has turned from the criticism of knowledge-exchange practices to a wider commentary concerning the decline of the public good of education. Recent literature demonstrates the “pressing need not only to diagnose what’s happening but also to oppose changes that go against the public interest” (Williams “Deconstructing Academe” 8). This approach is exemplified in Louis Menand’s *The Marketplace of Ideas* (2010), Christopher Newfield’s *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (2008) and Marc Bousquet’s *How the University Works* (2008). Although critical university studies were founded in a US context, it has become increasingly applicable within the English higher education system. A collection of similar key texts arose in England after the changes to undergraduate funding in 2010: Stefan Collini’s often cited article “Browne’s Gamble” (2010) published in the *London Review of Books*, Andrew McGettigan’s *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets, and the Future of Higher Education* (2013), and Stephen Ball’s *The Education Debate* (2013). The changes to education policy in the late 2000s acted as the stimulus for this debate. As McGettigan observes “now is the time to set out what agenda the government has been pursuing, how it has been pursued without democratic mandate or oversight, and how it is being extended without parliamentary scrutiny” (2). This thesis builds on this scholarship, through critiquing the naturalised processes of economisation. However, the exploration of alternative sites for valuation *beyond* the market is an underdeveloped area in critical university studies. In order to redress this gap, my project contributes specific examples of ways to articulate the potential of non-economic values of the humanities, rather than solely critiquing the current economic mode.

1.2 The Public Value of the Humanities

Since 2008 there have been a number of edited collections from various disciplines that have concentrated on the public good of the humanities. *The Public Value of the Humanities* (2011), edited by Jonathan Bate, features responses from over thirty academics who address the influences of marketisation and financial cuts to higher education in the UK. *The Humanities and Public Life* (2014), edited by Peter Brooks and Hilary Jewett, provides philosophical reflections upon the public value of the humanities and includes essays by Judith Butler, Elaine Scarry, Patricia J. Williams and Jonathan Lear, among others. The application of contemporary philosophy and critical theory to the context of contemporary higher education in Brooks and Jewett's text is particularly useful for this thesis. 2011 saw the publication of three edited collections framed as political manifestos against the marketisation of higher education in England: *A Manifesto for the Public University* (2011), edited by John Holmwood, *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* (2011), edited by Michael Bailey and Des Freeman, and *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (2011), edited by Thomas Docherty. This work continues into the present, as seen in the 2016 publication of *Against Value in the Arts and Education*, edited by Sam Ladkin, Robert McKay and Emile Bojesen.

The wealth of recent publications testifies to the influence of the post-2010 policy developments. These works draw together a community of concern and the multiplicity of responses indicates the depth of feeling, despite many of the authors not having a research background in economic policy, history of education, or critiques of neoliberalism that this thesis develops. Rather than reproducing these arguments that, like critical university studies, are framed in response to the economic imperative, this project adopts a less reactive stance in resisting the

language of crisis or “war”.¹ Nonetheless, these edited collections provide a rich discussion of purpose and demonstrate the wide community of scholars who are concerned by the changes to higher education. The value of the humanities is a debate that affects the academy as a whole. The plurality of responses should be recognised as a positive occurrence that is indicative of a wider resilience and resistance to the challenges facing the values of higher education.

1.3 Social Impact Studies

A significant body of literature within cultural policymaking and arts management focuses on the social impact of the arts and humanities. Eleonora Belfiore’s work is particularly significant in this regard, from her blog *The Cultural Value Initiative* and her monograph with Oliver Bennett, *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History* (2008), to her edited collection with Anna Upchurch, *Humanities in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Utility and Markets* (2013). These works are cited throughout this thesis and are particularly significant to my presentation of cultural policy in chapter four, which explores the relationship between the humanities and public museums. The journal *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* has maintained a dialogue around value and “impact”, including several special issues published during 2015: *Forum on the Public Value of Arts and Humanities Research* (14.1) and *Forum on Civic Engagement in the Arts and Humanities* (14.3). The articles within these volumes draw attention to interactions between humanities scholars and other social institutions within healthcare, law, education and culture.

¹ Book titles invoking such violent imagery are common, see Bérubé & Nelson (1995) *Higher Education Under Fire*; Giroux, H. (2014) *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education*; Docherty, T. (2015) *Universities at War*; Wright & Shore (2017) *Death of the Public University? Uncertain Futures for Higher Education in the Knowledge Economy*.

There are a number of organisations that have been established in order to explore the social impact of the humanities. For example, the European Network for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (ENRESSH), which explores the consequences of research evaluation criteria from an interdisciplinary perspective and the European Consortium for Humanities Institutes and Centres (ECHIC), founded by Rosi Braidotti in 2008, which aims “to speak on behalf of the humanities and develop a language for the (position of) humanities institutes in European universities today” (“Aims” echic.org). This thesis builds on work I have carried out as an active participant in both organisations. Other public institutions, such as the British Academy, have also been proactive in presenting a case for the social impact of the humanities: see “Past, Present, and Future” (June 2010). This report provides narrative case studies of beneficial projects and highlights that “there is no simple way of demonstrating the subtle and unexpected ways in which academic disciplines ‘contribute to the vitality of society’” (5). The growing body of scholarship in this area testifies to the value of the humanities beyond the university as a significant part of contemporary social life.

1.4 New Contributions

The three research communities highlighted above provide a significant body of evidence for the value of the humanities; however, this research is presented almost exclusively in relation to economic terms. Writers within critical university studies critique the processes of marketisation and are, therefore, working in direct response to economic governance. Both edited collections, which address the public value of the humanities and scholarship that documents the social impact of research, make

concessions to policy demands that knowledge should be justified and made readily accountable. This thesis consistently pursues a valuation that is humanistic in its approach and aims. The following four chapters construct a valuation of the humanities that is in contact with policy, the sciences, fiction, and public cultural institutions. Throughout, historically aware critical interpretation is offered as a means to avoid repeating well-worn economic defences. This thesis offers articulation in place of justification.

2.0 The Relationship with the Past: From Liberal to Neoliberal Education

Each chapter of this thesis draws nineteenth-century educational debates into contact with the present moment. Therefore, the remainder of this introductory chapter directly addresses the conceptual significance of this methodological choice. The following discussion establishes an overarching relationship between the value of liberal education in the Victorian past and the value of neoliberal education in the present. Nineteenth-century liberal education sought to cultivate a society of individuals equipped with faculties for making moral choices and living meaningful lives, whereas contemporary neoliberal higher education redefines individuals primarily as consumers of education. There has been a shift whereby the freedom of an individual has been transformed into an individual's freedom of choice, in a free market of economic opportunity. However, such a linear perspective of history is misleading. As Dinah Birch explains in *Our Victorian Education*, "our educational thinking reflects, often without our realizing it, patterns of thought that are rooted in the Victorian period" (123). Establishing the relationship between liberal and neoliberal education is by no means straightforward, historically, linguistically, politically, or otherwise. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to establish a methodology for handling the fissure between liberal and neoliberal education that is used throughout the thesis. This is achieved, first, by demarcating the context of *the present* and outlining the contemporary context of neoliberalism; second, by articulating the theoretical affiliations and dissonances between liberal and neoliberal education; and third, by assessing three recent studies by Dinah Birch, Stefan

Collini, and Helen Small that have successfully interrelated contemporary educational debates with concepts and literatures from the Victorian period.

While the general critical consensus affirms that the Victorian period was important in the formation of the present systems of governance in education, there has been little investigation into specifically *how* these structures and discursive modes came to be adopted into twenty-first-century policymaking. With this in mind, this introduction offers a detailed assessment of the ways in which our Victorian inheritance is partly responsible for the current econocratic context but also bequeaths the contemporary humanities valuable tools for thinking through the present challenges.

2.1 Describing 2008-14 as the Present Moment in Higher Education

This project delineates the period of 2008-14 as a period of particular importance within higher education. This timeframe represents a significant watershed in higher education policy in England for two reasons. First, it encompasses the launch of the Browne Review in 2009, which was commissioned to “examine the balance of contributions to higher education funding by taxpayers, students, graduates and employers” (HC Deb 9 Nov 2009, vol. 499, col. 4WS). Second, it includes the publication of “Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education” (known as the *Browne Report*) in 2010 and the corresponding white paper “Students at the Heart of the System” the following year, which confirmed the shift from a public to a private funding model for higher education in England based on undergraduate student tuition. These documents proposed significant changes in both the governance and attitude towards the value of higher education, which had long-lasting effects:

education was commodified, a market of tuition was established, and students were configured as consumers.

The *Browne Report* initially suggested that the cap on tuition fees (£3,225 in 2009-10) should be removed, although in practice it was not removed but raised to £9,000, tripling tuition fees for most students. An arguably more profound change proposed in the report was the removal of Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) block grants for undergraduate teaching. Courses that were not recognised as a national priority, which included nearly all arts and humanities courses (referred to as Band D), lost all financial support from the government. A contribution was only offered to “the most expensive subjects, such as medicine, the laboratory sciences and engineering” (“Students at the Heart of the System” 15).² These policies have profound effects on the valuation of the humanities. As a result, chapter one presents a close analysis of the implications of the *Browne Report* in the historical context of Payment by Results, and chapter two provides an extended discussion of the prioritisation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM henceforth) subjects. In addition to changes in undergraduate tuition, research in higher education was also subject to significant reform. 2008 represents the start date for the contemporary period of this project because it marks the start of the first cycle of the Research Excellence Framework (REF henceforth) between 2008-14. This introduced the ‘impact’ criterion into research assessment, which evaluates scholarly research in terms of its potential contribution to wider economic, societal, and political life, which is addressed in chapter four.

Throughout this thesis, the present is limited to the period between 2008-14 in order to avoid speculation on future changes to assessment methods, for example,

² The report details that “small and specialist institutions such as music and arts conservatoires will still receive some support” (16).

the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), or potential political changes such as Labour's promise to abolish tuition fees. The context of 2008-14 provides a strong body of evidence for the economisation of higher education both in terms of policymaking and wider global politics. However, although this project is a response to changes in the contemporary academy, it relies on establishing strong historical lineages with policy and critical ideas from the nineteenth century. I first outline the broader context of the present including a definition of neoliberalism (section 2.2), evidence of the domination of economic value in higher education (section 2.3), and an account of the humanities response to the perception of crisis (section 2.4). Once the contemporary situation is clearly established, the third part of this introductory chapter introduces the historical interconnections between liberal and neoliberal education.

2.2 Economic Value as a Monoculture Under Neoliberalism

The marketisation of the higher education sector is not an isolated incident. 2008 saw the effects of the global financial crisis permeate governance structures around the world. Austerity measures put into place following the crisis provided a context in which extended accountability and more economic valuation were claimed to be necessary. On 26 November 2008, BBC Business reported that the UK economy was shrinking for the first time since 1991.³ The effects of the global financial crisis led to the 2010-15 Coalition government announcing spending cuts across a large number of public sectors. Helen Carosso notes how “the wider economic climate — in which almost all areas of government were facing cuts [...] made a new funding

³ See BBC Business (2008) “Data Confirms Economy Shrinking”.

model for universities unavoidable” (33). It was under these conditions of economic retrenchment that market-led policies of higher education were introduced. This thesis argues that, rather than presenting policymakers with an inevitable conclusion, the financial crash was used as an excuse to privatise higher education under the auspices of crisis and retrenchment.

Therein the idea of the neoliberal university in England was fully realised. Matthew Eagleton-Pierce observes that the term ‘neoliberalism’ is like a “Swiss army knife” since it has been variously used for:

explaining the behaviour of Wall Street banks in light of the financial crisis (Duménil and Lévy 2011); the everyday experience of life in China (Zhang and Ong 2008); the transformation of Dubai’s skyline (Davis 2007); the weakening of democracy (Brown 2015); the growth of inequality, insecurity and austerity (Schrecker & Bamba 2015). (xiii)

Neoliberalism is simultaneously understood as an ideology, a mode of governance, and a set of policies concerning deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation of business.⁴ For the context of this project Wendy Brown’s work on how neoliberalism represents “the weakening of democracy” (Eagleton-Pierce xiii) is the most immediately useful. Brown has written extensively on the “neglected dimensions” of moral or democratic life under neoliberalism; the devaluation of the humanities is exemplary of this decline in social values beyond the market. Her definition of neoliberalism offers a useful starting point for understanding the structures that are

⁴ For key definitional texts on neoliberalism see Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Saad-Filho, A. and Johnston, D. (2005) *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, Boas, T. C. & Gans-Morse, J. (2009) “Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan”.

currently shaping the economisation of higher education in England. Her chapter “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy”, published in *Edgework* (2005), makes an important distinction that,

neo-liberalism is not simply a set of economic policies; it is not only about facilitating free trade, maximizing corporate profits, and challenging welfarism. Rather, neo-liberalism carries a social analysis which, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neo-liberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; rather it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player. (39-40)

Understanding neoliberalism as a rational approach is imperative to understanding how descriptions of value are generated. Brown’s essay captures the slippery term “neoliberalism” with relative precision. In the context of this project, which looks back to the values of liberal education as opposed to liberal economic theory, the careful handling of ideologically loaded terminology is of principal importance. Brown’s observation that neoliberalism extends market rationality into “*all institutions and social action*” (40) demonstrates the possibility that not only economic policy, but also the actions of government, the management of public institutions, and even the realm of individual choice can be reduced to a set of market values. Under neoliberalism, an extension of market rationality to all parts of public life sees “thinking and judging [...] reduced to instrumental calculation” with “no morality, no faith, no heroism, indeed no meaning outside the market” (45). Such a mentality,

Brown argues, is already “permeating universities today, from admissions and recruiting to the relentless consumer mentality of students in relationship to university brand names, courses, and services, from faculty raiding and pay scales to promotion criteria” (43). As a market-driven structure becomes the norm, activities within universities with less measurable outcomes and economic orientation are vulnerable. Neoliberalism challenges the idea of a community of interconnected individuals. As Noam Chomsky writes in *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (1998): “instead of citizens it produces consumers” (11). The reconfiguration of students and scholars in exclusively economic terms poses severe consequences for the value of education.

2.3 The Dominance of Economic Value within Higher Education

Neoliberalism within higher education is manifested in what Regenia Gagnier describes as the emergence of “criteria of worth” (11) wherein the value of education is reduced to that which can be accounted for. Gagnier’s 2013 article, “Operationalizing Hope: The Neoliberalization of British Universities in Historico-Philosophical Perspective” highlights the proliferation of “research income, league table criteria, compliance or alignment with the University’s competitive drive in a global Higher Education market” (12). What is most significant is that the changes to higher education have not only affected financial and organisational processes but also have come to shape the wider values of higher education. Mark Fisher describes how what was previously periodic assessment has been “superseded by a permanent and ubiquitous measurement which cannot help but generate the same

perpetual anxiety” (*Capitalist Realism* 52).⁵ Within a student (read consumer) led sector (read market) of higher education (read product manufacturing facility), scholars are increasingly required to articulate themselves as offering desirable commodities that produce a financial return on investment.

Although the ascendancy of the processes and practices of economic valuation in higher education is ubiquitous, it has rarely been documented in a scholarly fashion. Close examination of policy reports and white papers reveals the extent to which the language of value has become reduced to financial indicators and incentives. For example, the Universities UK 2014 report “The Economic Impact of Higher Education Institutions in England” details how higher education in England “has a total revenue of £23.3 billion, employs over 262,700 staff and has over two million students” (1). The language chosen, in which scholars are “staff” and students are framed as an asset that the country “has” (UUK), is representative of this shift.⁶ The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has been quick to conform to economic justifications of the value of scholarship. Their 2009 “Leading the World” report estimated that “the value of non-UK undergraduates and postgraduates attracted here to undertake arts and humanities degrees lies in the range £2.05 billion and £3.29 billion” (AHRC 11). The imprecision of cultural economics (the potential difference between two and three billion pounds) is indicative of the challenges of financial valuation of the humanities. More importantly, such attempts at economic justification draw attention to a lack of acceptable languages with which to publicly articulate the work of the humanities beyond financial description.

⁵ For example, until 2008, the REF’s predecessor, the Research Assessment Exercise was conducted based on peer-review and at the level of the department, not at the level of individual outputs.

⁶ The data cited in the UUK 2014 report is derived from statistics gathered in 2011-12.

Flora S. Michaels describes the danger of accepting economic value as the natural order under neoliberalism in *Monoculture: How One Story Is Changing Everything* (2011). She argues that contemporary culture has become dominated by a single mode of thinking in which “the master story is economic” (9). This logic forms a “governing pattern that [a] culture obeys” (1) and the effect of this master story is the economisation of everything.⁷ Michaels’ account pays particular attention to narrative and language. Today, words such as “performance”, “speculation” and “value” connote the financial market more readily than anything else.⁸ However, it is worthwhile remembering that *King Lear* is also performance, just as *Brave New World* is a speculation. The word ‘value’ should not simply concern economic value, but also social, ethical, and moral values. Neoliberalism would have us forget that economic value is just one voice among many. Economic modes of thinking can “become so engrained as the only reasonable reality that we begin to forget our other stories, and fail to see the monoculture in its totality, never mind question it” (Michaels 9). Arguments for the value of the humanities need to address this monoculture directly and articulate the alternatives. In her keynote address at Loyola University, Chicago, 29 January 2009, Naomi Klein explicitly stated that if “we lose our narrative, we lose our story, we become disorientated” (“No is Not Enough”). The following section explores how a sense of disorientation and a narrative of crisis presently dominate critical responses to neoliberal changes within higher education.

⁷ See also Sandel, M. (2012) *What Money Can't Buy*, especially “Everything for Sale” (8-11).

⁸ For further thought on economic language see Marsh, N. (2007) *Books, Money, Finance, and Speculation in Recent British Fiction*.

2.4 Arguing Against Crisis in the Humanities

The opening pages of Martha Nussbaum's *Not for Profit* (2010) describe that "we are in the midst of a crisis of massive proportions and grave global significance [...] a crisis that goes largely unnoticed like a cancer [...] a world-wide crisis in education" (1-2). Since 2008, these neoliberal pressures of "decentralization, market competition, and institutional pluralism" (Graham and Diamond 18) have created an "acute atmosphere of crisis" (Amsler 62) within the English higher education system. An urgent and defensive mentality is reflected throughout literature concerning the contemporary academy.⁹ John H. Plumb presents the following options available to humanities scholars within the context of a crisis:

either they blindly cling to their traditional attitudes, and pretend that their function is what it was, and that all will be well, so long as change is repelled, or they retreat into their own private professional world, and deny any social function to their subject. And so the humanities are at a cross-roads, at a crisis in their existence: they must either change the image that they present, adapt themselves to the needs of a society dominated by science and technology, or retreat into social triviality. (8)

According to Plumb, the humanities are in "crisis" in a "society dominated by science and technology" (8). However, it is important to note that this book was published fifty years ago, in 1964, and "social triviality" (8) is not yet the fate of such scholarship. Yet, the notion of crisis still haunts the humanities. Although the future of the humanities in the 2010s is contested, many of the current debates have

⁹ See Shattock, M. (2008); Eagleton, T. (2010); Vernon, J. (2010); Bailey & Freedman (2011); Docherty, T. (2011); Giroux, H. (2014).

precedence in the past. Plumb's vision has not yet been fulfilled, despite nearly half a century of change. Another group of texts suggests that the crisis for the humanities occurred in the mid-1990s.¹⁰ The intention of drawing attention to these previous moments of crisis is not to dismiss nor downplay the implications of past policymaking. However, evaluating current policymaking in light of a longer historical context of uncertainty or dispute allows for a clearer understanding of the state of "crisis" that surrounds the humanities.

In *The Humanities and the Dream of America* (2011), Geoffrey Galt Harpham argues that "the humanities represent by their very nature a crisis [...] the humanities must understand this condition as its strength, not its weakness" (40). Here, Harpham refers to the orientation of the humanities "toward acts of reflection and representation, their invitation to a loss of self, their investment in unconscious forces, and their confusion of intellect and imagination" (39). These are properties that resist the neoliberal trappings of singular answers, irrefutable data, and tangible results. Responding to Harpham's proposition, Jonathan Culler suggests that, above and beyond these approaches, research in the humanities involves "redescription and recontextualization" which is a "metaoperation, involved in thinking about thinking" ("In Need of a Name" 38). Culler argues that further engagement with the idea of the "reflexive propensity" (38) of the humanities might prove to be a useful tool in defining alternative values. The task of returning, of "redescription", echoes Fisher's definition of emancipatory politics as a means of revealing — "what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be mere contingency" (17) — in which

¹⁰ See Bérubé and Nelson (1995) *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*; Ryan, A. (1999) *Liberal Anxieties and Liberal Education*. See also "English and the Future of the Humanities" position paper by Patricia Waugh which identifies how "similar debates have run at different moments of the twentieth century — the 20s and 30s, in particular, and the end of the 50s and early 60s".

there is potential to reimagine and disrupt economic rationalities that have only recently been adopted as natural fact.

Helen Small provides an excellent explanation of the benefit of redescription in *The Value of the Humanities* (2013). In consensus with Fisher, Harpham and Culler, she maintains that:

one function of scholarship in the humanities is, after all, to go over ground that generations have been over before, not only because interpretations and evaluations may change but because it is part of the scholar's responsibility to keep reinterpreting and re-evaluating that cultural memory in the context of the now. (145)

This is an important realisation for the value of the humanities, especially since policymaking often does not benefit from the possession of a long cultural memory. Nick Hillman, the former special adviser to David Willetts (then Minister of State for Universities and Science 2010-14), stated that when tuition fees were increased in 2010, there was “no institutional memory on which to rely” (“The Coalition’s Higher Education Reforms in England” 331). Elsewhere, Hillman describes that “when the policy to triple tuition fees was being drawn up in 2010, there was barely anyone around who had worked on Tony Blair’s tripling of fees just a few years beforehand” (“10 Commandments”). This personal reflection from a reformed civil servant offers practical insight into institutional amnesia in contemporary policymaking culture.¹¹ As Small suggests, it is “part of the scholar’s responsibility” (145) to uphold the

¹¹ Although no longer a civil servant, Hillman is the director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI).

importance of “cultural memory in the context of the now” (145). Nowhere is this more pertinent than in the present valuation of our own disciplines.

Speaking for the humanities scholar, James Vernon exclaims: “economic utility is not the measure of who *we are* or who we want to become” (“The End of the Public University in England” my italics). This pronouncement captures the tension between the aspirations of policy, which configures higher education as a business, and the values of education and research as understood by humanities scholars. The reduction of education to instrumental and economic forms is objectionable to many teachers, researchers, and practitioners within the arts and humanities. Rick Rylance best describes this conflict in *Literature and the Public Good* (2016):

the use of measurement data and justificatory requirements [...] are ubiquitous in public life and rile humanistic opinion. When decision-makers demand ‘value assurance’, humanists see a category mistake. The *intrinsic* value of art, or scholarly learning, or abstract ideas, or faith beliefs, or one’s inwardness with foreign languages, for example, are said to be good in themselves. They demonstrate their worth by existing, and only incidentally through worldly activity simulated by them. (14)

The value of the humanities has been recognised for much longer than the existence of the REF; Rens Bod’s *A New History of the Humanities* (2013) observes how the humanistic tradition is centuries old. Although values have adapted within various contexts, the work of the humanities continually “seeks principles and patterns while at the same time giving us an understanding of what makes us human” (Bod 10). Economically-minded policy flourishes when the long and rich history of alternative

values in humanistic study becomes obscured. This thesis enacts a return, a remembrance, and a re-envisioning of the potential value of the humanities in order to face such narrow evaluations in the twenty-first century. Engagement with the rich history of value between the individual, the university, and the state, reveals the present monoculture to be a contingency. The final two parts of this introductory chapter begin the process of contextualising the current debates by exploring the connection between liberal and neoliberal educational policy and practices.

3.0 From Liberal to Neoliberal Education

3.1 Articulating the Values of a Liberal Education

In *Values in Conflict: The University, the Marketplace and the Trials of Liberal Education* (2002) Paul Axelrod describes how “definitions of liberal education can be overly general, in conflict, or steeped in nostalgia” (8). A liberal education is, at its most basic level, one of the broadest definitions of an education, since it aims to instil both general knowledge and moral values. However, the definition of a liberal education is in conflict because, as Mary Evans argues, despite it being “for everyone and of value to everyone” (22), it is closely tied to “associations to privilege and the assumption that universities are in some sense ‘separate’ from other forms of social inequality” (20). This is a tension between the perceived, or actual, elitism of studying high culture and universal access to education. This tension is central to Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), in which he argues society should

do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as [culture] uses them itself, freely, — nourished, and not bound by them. (79)

The Victorian ideal of a liberal education would be democratically available to all. Ralph White emphasises how the social value of liberal education in the nineteenth century “was to be achieved by its dissemination, to a greater or lesser degree, through society, than as a specific training for philosopher kings” (“The Anatomy of a Victorian Debate” 63). Individual autonomy, or what Elaine Hadley describes as “the

Victorian fantasy of liberal agency” (93), is found recurrently in definitions of a liberal education. Amanda Anderson’s *Bleak Liberalism* (2016) provides a useful list of the kinds of approaches that this liberal attitude might include: “open-mindedness, tolerance, sympathy, responsiveness, and a set of aesthetic features associated with these postures — perspectivalism, particularity, complexity, density of representation” (4). Therefore, it should be understood that claims for the value of a liberal education in the Victorian period were highly aspirational concerning the potential of self-civilising individuals. Arnold, alongside Thomas H. Huxley and John Ruskin, wrote in favour of the value of a liberal education within a culture in which specialisation and vocational training were promoted to the lower and middle classes, against the elitism of traditional university education, and as a challenge to the selfish individualism inherent in *laissez-faire* industrial society.

In opposition to the values of a liberal education, with its appeal to the inward cultivation of citizenry with general rather than technical intellects, the economic liberal sought freedom from regulation and the ability to pursue capital gains in a free market. Herbert Spencer is representative of the belief in economic liberalism, which argues that individuals can better manage their own lives than the state. For example, in *The Man Versus the State* (1884), Spencer observes that “officialism is stupid. Under the natural course of things each citizen tends towards his fittest function” (138) and in contrast “the direct employment by society of individuals, private companies, and spontaneously-formed institutions, is good in virtue of its simplicity” (137). Many of the beneficial examples of liberalism cited in *The Man Versus the State* relate to commercial activity. Spencer conceptualises the idea of a public good in relation to an individual’s freedom, in the sense that a “citizen may act unchecked” (5). An individual acting in their own interest, Spencer argued, was the

best thing for society as a whole. This enactment of social Darwinism saw state interference as an obstacle to the innate instincts of individual character. Gagnier observes in *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization* (2010) how Spencer believed that “with character the state becomes unnecessary” (32). The successful cultivation of personal qualities such as effort, thrift, duty, and personal responsibility would mean that “the individual would be self-, not State-regulated” (32). The extent to which these ambitions are reinforced within the neoliberal university system is worthy of consideration, especially in the context of the deregulated market of student tuition. Further analysis of the relationship between the individual and the market, without state intervention, is explored in chapter one (section 2.4).

However, nineteenth-century social liberal theory was more hesitant to dismiss the role of the state entirely. Arnold identifies that “a State is in reality made up of the individuals who compose it, and that every individual is the best judge of his own interests” (*Culture and Anarchy* 83). John Stuart Mill concurs: “the worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it” (*On Liberty* 219). Mill’s use of the word ‘worth’ is non-economic; his use encompasses a wider notion of social value, which is expressed by a liberal education. The purpose of the state for Mill and Arnold is to protect against a kind of selfish-individualism and encourage the cultivation of people who would collectively create an equal and civil society. This is built upon values of tolerance and openness: what John Ruskin called “affections as one man owes to another” (*Unto This Last* 169) and George Eliot termed “the extension of our sympathies” (“The Natural History of German Life” 144).

In “The Anatomy of a Victorian Debate: An Essay in the History of Liberal Education” (1986) Ralph White identifies five seminal figures in the debates concerning liberal education between 1850-70: John Henry Newman, John Stuart

Mill, Henry Sidgwick, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Matthew Arnold. Although each has much to contribute to the debate, and are cited throughout this thesis, I concur with White that Arnold's account of liberal education is the "most synthetic" (58). Arnold's position as an individual within the education sector, both as the son of the eminent headmaster of Rugby school and his own career as a school inspector, is significant in his success in capturing the distinctive properties of a liberal education. Although often remembered for the lofty ideals of "sweetness and light" (*Culture and Anarchy* 79) much of Arnold's writing, elsewhere and in *Culture and Anarchy* itself, addresses practical implications such as administrative reform (74), class prejudices (103), and urban overpopulation (176). White argues that in its social importance Arnold's "surpassed Mill's and Huxley's [writings] in its urgent contemporaneity" (58). At Arnold's funeral, Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College Oxford, declared that "he was the most sensible man of genius I have ever known" (qtd. in Collini *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* 24). Arnold's writing as a social critic provides arguments that are rooted in the classical themes of a liberal education while being actively engaged in the politics of his time. Fred Clarke recognises how "Arnold was the creator in this country of what may be called, as a study, the 'politics' of education" (qtd. in Connell ix). The application of Arnold's ideas on a liberal education will be incorporated throughout this thesis since his writings offer a means through which to politicise a set of policies that seek to appear neutral.

An Arnoldian perspective of a liberal education rejects the idea that individuals should do what they like and challenges Spencer's preference for *laissez-faire* economic value as a suitable model for governance. Although a liberal education does not configure value in economic terms, it shares an aspiration towards an agency of individuals that economic liberalism also champions. In *Victorian Literature*

and the Victorian State (2003), Lauren Goodlad suggests that Victorian liberalism “persistently asserted itself as antipathy toward statist interference — a discourse that anticipated the ardent neoliberalism [...] of our own day” (viii). There is a somewhat uneasy interconnection between the recognition of the ability for self-autonomous moral improvement and the emergence of a conception of the individual as a discrete economic agent in a market. Despite the tensions between liberal economics and a liberal education, one similarity is clear: they both champion the cultivation of the individual over the power of the governing body of the state.

Goodlad describes this irregularity as being indicative of a “dueling worldview” (22) that pervades much critical thinking at the time. This contradiction is also discussed in David Wayne Thomas’ *Cultivating Victorians* (2004), which explores the “many-sidedness” (26) of Victorian liberalism. Thomas notes how the liberalism of Mill and Arnold in particular, does not offer an “especially coherent or predictable stance” (39). However, he suggests that this “so-called incoherence of many-sidedness in these instances might more charitably be taken as a reflection of [...] the inherent precariousness of the self-conception underlying liberal agency” (39). The experience of living in a time of complex liberalisms produces precarious results. John Frow connects these two contradictory definitions of ‘liberalism’ through the image of a contract: “at once a commercial instrument and an instrument for the imaginary institution of the social” (426). These are oppositional images: as a legal and commercial instrument a contract secures private ownership, as an imaginary institution of the social a contract is a collective and civic responsibility. Frow’s imagery captures the contradiction between these two diverse liberalisms that co-existed in the mid-nineteenth century.

A liberal education is further distinguished from the liberal economic model in

its pursuit of immaterial instead of material value. Goodlad argues that “the high-minded cooperation sought by John Stuart Mill, [...] Harriet Martineau’s vision of a society fuelled by individual self-improvement, [...] and] Matthew Arnold’s conviction in the enlightening potential of a cultured elite” all exhibit a common adherence to “an antimaterialist and moral worldview” (22). When an individual is considered as a consumer they are identified as a singular entity. Expressions of individuality in descriptions of a liberal education are in association with, and connection to, other people. For example, Arnold’s description in *Culture and Anarchy* argues that “perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection” (62). A community is built up, not by the state, but by a collection of liberally educated (and thus liberated) individuals. The conclusion of John Ruskin’s speech “Traffic” presented at the Town Hall in Bradford, 21 April 1864, best captures the spirit of this particular kind of collective individualism that liberal educators pursued:

sanctifying wealth into ‘commonwealth,’ all your art, your literature, your daily labours, your domestic affection, and citizen’s duty, will join and increase into one magnificent harmony. You will know then how to build, well enough; you will build with stone well, but with flesh better; temples not made with hands, but riveted of hearts; and that kind of marble, crimson-veined, is indeed eternal.
(32)

This is a powerful image for two reasons. First, because it captures the spirit of

individual intellectual wealth contributing to wider social and public goods, a commonwealth; and second, because it describes the immaterialism of developing a fulfilled life in concert with others. For Ruskin, the greatest success is the cultivation and culmination of human flesh, and agency, into something greater than the sum of its parts.

Such anti-materialistic attitudes make a liberal education incompatible with the material interests of economic liberalism. This parallels the value problem experienced in the economic-education debate in England today (albeit under the organisation of neoliberal ideologies as opposed to liberal ones): the non-instrumental and socio-ethical dimensions of the humanities are incompatible with the “business ontology” (Fisher 17) of higher education policy. The difference is that in the mid-nineteenth century liberal education and liberal economics were both held in esteem and therefore simultaneously shaped the policymaking debate. In our present culture, expressions of the value of non-instrumental education in the Victorian period are continually inspiring because of their confident oration. Such debates concerning the economy and education during the Victorian period were at their height between 1850-80. The decades of extensive reform produced some of the most passionate and well-defined defences of the value of a liberal education. Returning to this historical context re-animates critiques that were created in a time when Fisher’s titular question, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* had yet to become a necessary enquiry. The plurality of nineteenth-century liberalisms is unlike the monoculture of neoliberalism. Co-existent alternatives and opinions sparked open debate; Amanda Anderson recognises a general trend that “liberalism is prompted by enduring challenges, often born of crisis, that exert their pressure on the internal dynamics of liberal thought” (*Bleak Liberalism* 2). The following section

explores the potential for bringing the contradictions and confidence of liberalism into closer contact with the narrative of neoliberalism.

3.2 Speaking of Liberal Values in the Neoliberal University

The clearest and most convincing iterations of the value of a liberal education are found in our Victorian past. Therefore, returning to this rich site of discussion can provide useful provocations for the present. Dinah Birch observes that we cannot seek to directly replicate the work of the Victorians, because “their understanding of politics, race, class, and gender is not ours” (*Our Victorian Education* 44). However, it is beneficial to return to their debates and reconsider the challenges that they pose in the context of our dominant neoliberal paradigm, since they remind us that “all economies, however defined, are social in their origins and in their consequences, and bind us together in a reciprocal process that can still construct and confirm our shared understanding of value” (*Our Victorian Education* 46). Examination of the social origins and consequences of the neoliberal economy is productive since it disturbs the current economic valuation of education. What qualities of a liberal education persist in the contemporary academy? How has neoliberalism changed “our shared understanding of value” (46)?

In order to answer these questions, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which a liberal education became ‘liberalised’ over the past 150 years, in the sense that it is open to a wider demographic of students. In 2015-6, 49% of young people (under the age of thirty) had attended university in England, a higher percentage than at any other point in history, despite the increasing financial burdens on the

individual students.¹² The number of universities in England has grown from two in 1826 to one hundred and ten in 2018.¹³ The 1960s saw a prominent leap, whereby the number of universities rose from twenty-two (in 1959) to forty-five (in 1969) as a result of the recognition of plate-glass universities by the University Grants Committee in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the publication of the *Robbins Report* in 1963.¹⁴ Widening access to free education was the ambition of the welfare state, which blossomed out of late-Victorian liberalism and persisted until the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s. Between 1962 to the early 1990s, education was free for individuals and was supported by a state maintenance grant. The institution of tuition fees under Tony Blair's administration in 1998 marked the start of a shift from state investment in higher education to a system of individual fiscal responsibility for students.

2010 saw the free market of higher education being fully realised as the state support for the arts and humanities undergraduate courses was removed entirely. The policy implemented by the *Browne Report* fits into a longer history of neoliberalism but represents a sea change in the valuation of higher education. The relationship between the individual and the state was significantly altered since students were now customers at private universities, rather than citizens benefiting from education as part of a liberal democracy. However, it is worthwhile to consider that whilst policy may reconfigure students as consumers, the actual people opting to attend universities represent a range of individual people with alternative interests and motivations. Both Spencer's economic liberalism and Arnold's liberal education

¹² Source: Department for Education. (2017) "Participation Rates In Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/2007-2015/2016".

¹³ Note that Scotland had five universities in 1826 and fifteen in 2018.

¹⁴ 1992 saw a second surge in expansion with the Further and Higher Education Act transforming polytechnic colleges into universities able to award their own degrees. The number of universities rose from forty-six in 1990 to eighty-eight in 1994.

recognised the potential power of the individual in relation to the state. An autonomous dimension, inherent in definitions of a liberal education, demonstrated above, is also found in the language used to describe and define the value of higher education. Universities promise students an abundance of possibilities: “diverse study choices” (University of Brighton); “the largest ranges of subjects of any university in the UK” (University of Kent); “a wide array of related disciplines, offering outstanding flexibility and choice” (University of Exeter).¹⁵ The above definitions are taken from the respective college homepages for the humanities and are designed to appeal to the student-as-consumer through a proliferation of choice. Further examination of the marketing language of the humanities reveals that this supermarket of values operates in a more nuanced way than simple economic calculation of value.¹⁶ For example, the University of Chester’s response to “Why Study the Humanities” is not a typical neoliberal defence. On a page aimed at prospective students, the college promotes the benefits of uncertainty and complexity:

there is no final answer in scholarly inquiry in the Humanities [...] there is no quick fix, no easy solution, no off-the-shelf final answer. This means the harder you work, reading around your subject and developing your understanding, the greater your reward. (University of Chester)

¹⁵ Sources: University of Brighton “Course in Brief”; University of Kent “Humanities at Kent”; University of Exeter “College of Humanities”.

¹⁶ A brief note of caution against unbridled optimism: most institutional definitions of the humanities in the UK focus on the strength of the departments in league tables and in the REF, citing statistics and numerical representations of status.

The University of Chester humanities department places a strong emphasis on continuing development and the lack of a “final answer”. Instead, the individual student of the humanities is offered the potential of unending self-development. Although the promise of a “reward” hints at economic or cultural return on their financial investment, the phrasing remains distinctly non-specific.

Such articulations of the humanities suggest that the consumers, as well as the providers, are not solely interested in the financial return of education.¹⁷ The humanities offer prospective students an opportunity to pursue alternative values. The tagline for the Humanities BA at the University of Brighton is “if you want to change the world you live in, while challenging yourself, then this is the degree for you” (University of Brighton), the phrasing of which revives the kind of liberal self-fashioning that the Victorians celebrated.¹⁸ Cynically, it is clear that universities are targeting a student desire to be recognised as an individual. However, as Fisher observes: “the tiniest event can tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism” (81). I argue that any persistent conception of self-agency is promising. The relationship between liberal education and neoliberal education might appear to be linear when reading government white papers. However, in reconsidering the narrative from the perspective of individuals, both of students and scholars, an alternative set of values can be understood and articulated. The following section explores how recent scholarship in the humanities has re-engaged with liberal education as a disruptive and productive lens through which to speak up for the value of the humanities in the contemporary academy.

¹⁷ Further discussion of the multi-faceted values of students is raised in chapter one (section 2.4).

¹⁸ Elaine Hadley provides a thoughtful critique of this conception of applying this particularly heroic form of cognitive liberalism to twenty-first-century phenomena in “On a Darkling Plain: Victorian Liberalism and the Fantasy of Agency” (2005).

4.0 Our Victorian Inheritances

The above discussion of liberal education demonstrates that a reconsideration of the past not only informs us about history but can also come to alter our perceptions about the present. An extensive body of scholarship has explored the interrelations between the Victorian period and policymaking today. This chapter's final section discusses three significant texts, by Dinah Birch, Helen Small, and Stefan Collini, which have responded to the present state of education in England by drawing upon Victorian literature and cultural ideas. Birch's handling of the dynamic history of reform in nineteenth-century schools reminds us how "we need not feel paralysed, helplessly bound to continue in our present direction" (144). Collini provides a polemical call to arms to "revitalize ways of understanding the nature and importance that are in danger of being lost sight of in the present" (19). Small's precise taxonomical approach to rhetoric and argument proves an invaluable weapon for any would-be tactician in the war of value. She identifies how "it is vital to preserve a core description of the distinctiveness of humanistic interpretation" (4), a theory which is pursued throughout this thesis. Collectively, these works provide the methodological bedrock of this thesis. The specific relevance of the methods that each writer uses is explored below.

4.1 Dinah Birch's *Our Victorian Education* (2008)

Our Victorian Education establishes a strong sense of continuity between nineteenth-century educational structures and the present day. Birch observes how "entering the twenty-first century has made the Victorians seem further back in

history. But we still live in their light, and in their shadow” (vii). Despite the differences between liberal and neoliberal education outlined above, *Our Victorian Education* demonstrates how humanities scholarship can identify the ways in which historical values and ideological reflections continue to influence contemporary culture. For Birch, the continued relevance of the Victorian period is twofold. First, there are the “obstructive leftovers” (123) and the “false distinctions” (124) in the practices of educational policymaking. Birch identifies how distinctions of social class are a particularly significant inheritance from the Victorians. Second, there are critics who continue to inspire us: “Victorians [who] believed in the power of education with a passion that makes our own commitment look timorous and lukewarm” (123-4). In particular, Birch celebrates John Keats, Matthew Arnold, and Elizabeth Sewell for vocally demonstrating “the need for an education to bring together the layers of human identity — imaginative, intellectual, creative, emotional — into an experience of wholeness” (130). Birch identifies that both the structures of economisation in governance and its most rich critiques are rooted in the nineteenth century. As a result, *Our Victorian Education* emphasises the value of returning to the past in order to clarify our present moment as a warning, but also as a source of inspiration. Birch’s methodology is useful to this project because of its sense of connection, which disrupts the limited parameters of thinking in the context of crisis, which the present economic narrative in higher education encourages.

However, *Our Victorian Education* is concerned principally with elementary (now primary) education. The main distinction between elementary education and higher education was, and still is, legal compulsion; in 1862, all children were expected to participate in a basic education system and this was made strictly legal

in 1880.¹⁹ The obligatory nature of education persists in primary and secondary schooling today.²⁰ In contrast, higher education has always been an individual choice as opposed to a legal compulsion. This optionality is made clear in the *Browne Report*, which maintains that “it is reasonable to ask those who gain private benefits from Higher Education to help fund it rather than rely solely on public funds collected through taxation from people who may not have participated in higher education themselves” (21). The *Browne Report* foregrounds the individual advantages of education as “private benefits” (21), in its reasoning to remove undergraduate degrees from the structures of public funding. Such observations represent a failure to recognise the wider societal benefits of access to education for all. It is a move from a citizen-centred locus, albeit an elite citizen, to a consumerist model. Birch’s text identifies similar failings in the history of primary schooling, with the rise of quantitative evaluation and cultures of competition. She draws attention to how “state-sponsored yardsticks reveal disheartening numbers of failing children” and notes that “the most successful schools and universities are still largely populated by the offspring of affluent families” (122). In framing higher education as a “private benefit” (21), the *Browne Report* accuses universities of supporting individual privilege at the same time that it implements a policy that further reinforces elitist disparities. The neoliberal configuration of the student as a customer able to purchase private benefits omits the recognition of inequity within the supposed “free market” into which the would-be-student is forced to participate.

¹⁹ Compulsory Education began with Forster’s Act in 1870 but was not universally adopted due to factory owners’ fear that the removal of children as cheap labour would have damaging effects within industry.

²⁰ Children must attend school full-time from the age of five until they are sixteen, and continue in full-time education, work and part-time study or in an apprenticeship until they are eighteen.

Therefore, the difference between obligatory and non-obligatory attendance does not eliminate the relevance of Birch's observations concerning early and secondary schooling in the Victorian period. The concerns of class access, national interest in training, and the aspirations of the individual are pervasive and essential components at all levels of education in England. Admittedly, scholars with a specific interest in higher education cannot engage intimately with many of Birch's rich textual examples (ranging from *Hard Times* to Thomas Arnold's sermons). However, the argument that Victorian ideas "can give us a clearer understanding of the origins of our present problems" (Birch 144) need not be limited to one sector of education. This thesis extends Birch's reflections into the context of higher education. Small cites the significance of *Our Victorian Education* in the introduction of *The Value of the Humanities*, confirming that "[Birch's] clear-eyed description of why we should keep the Victorian origins of our current educational arguments in view is equally applicable to the condition of our universities" (9). I build upon Birch's approach throughout this project since her handling of the reflections between the present and the past is both elegant and effective in arguing for the value of a non-instrumental education.

4.2 Helen Small's *The Value of the Humanities* (2013)

Small begins *The Value of the Humanities* with an expressed desire to remain "taxonomic" (2) and to act objectively in regard to the current changes in higher education. She maintains that a "kind of calmer, cooler defence" (qtd. in Preston) best serves the humanities in the present moment of potential crisis. Small observes that the Victorian period is when "one sees emerging the now familiar pressure to

justify expenditure on educating students in the humanities in the face of resistance from many political economists” (*The Value of the Humanities* 7). Much like Birch, Small highlights the similarities between the Victorian period and the present moment, with specific reference to terms of expenditure and economic justification within the humanities. Small agrees that we owe the Victorians for “the patterns of joined debate, and often bitter disputation, over what education should be about, what it should be for, who should pay for it, and how we can best be sure of its worth” (9). Identifying these “patterns of joined debate” (9) between the nineteenth century and the present day is the central tactic of Small’s work. Instead of tracing historical events or policies, Small provides “genealogies of argument” (7) and develops an account of the lineage of specific rhetorical tactics.

The Value of the Humanities sets out “five arguments for the value of the humanities that have been influential historically and that still have persuasive power” (3). Each chapter tackles a different mode of defending the humanities and, in turn, assesses the strengths and limitations of each line of argument. The five arguments are as follows: one, that the humanities use distinctive approaches and explore content that other scholarly disciplines neglect; two, that the difference between use and usefulness is misunderstood; three, that the humanities contribute to societal happiness; four, that ‘Democracy Needs Us’; five, that the humanities should be valued for their own sake. Small’s rigorous catalogue of value debates is an invaluable resource for this thesis as several of the following chapters trace the genealogies of particular recurrent arguments. For example, chapter one assesses the emergence of the narrative of Payment by Results from *Lowe’s Code* (1862) to the *Browne Report* (2010). In addition, Small’s chapter “Distinction From Other Disciplines” is of particular relevance to the second chapter of this thesis, which re-

examines the two cultures debate as a means to interrogate the relationship between the humanities and STEM subjects in contemporary funding structures.

Small argues that the two cultures debate has a particularly significant genealogy owing to the form of the argument itself, as a recurrent dispute. She observes how “a form of argument that has a strong genealogy can, in itself, give it a measure of validity, providing a reason to recall it, play it out again in each new generation, pay homage, or attempt to dispel the shadow” (37). In this regard, the two cultures debate is perhaps the most visible instance of a recurrent cycle with a history whose “deeper historical roots go back into classical antiquity” (37). Although antiquity is where humanistic study can be first recognised, its specific disciplinary distinction would not be established within universities until the nineteenth century.²¹ Small identifies that it is in the nineteenth century where the most pronounced articulations are located. Therefore, the strength of *The Value of the Humanities* is “to go over ground that generations have been over before” (145) in order to reap the benefits of the specifically humanistic trait of re-interpretation.

In adopting a historical approach, Small offers a philosophical and rhetorical space that is not a simplistic reaction to contemporary policymaking trends. Her resistance to be drawn into the neoliberal conversation is admirable. Significantly, she acknowledges that “if the effect of the requirement for the humanities to justify their public value, or the terms in which they are permitted to do so, is to stifle their ability to ask the hard questions of their own intuitions of purpose and value then they really will be in trouble” (21). It is a persistent resistance to sensationalism and confrontation that distinguishes *The Value of the Humanities* from less level-headed defences of the humanities. Small suggests that “the humanities study the meaning-

²¹ Rens Bod’s *The New History of the Humanities* (2013) discusses the earlier iterations of *studia humanitatis* in the fourteenth century and the Roman *artes liberales* (2-3).

making practices of human culture, past and present, focusing on interpretation and critical evaluation, primarily in terms of the individual response and with an ineliminable element of subjectivity” (23). I explore the potential of the liberal individual to speak for the humanities in chapter three (section 4.3) and chapter four (see Hewison and Schlesinger section 4.0). A key benefit of Small’s taxonomy of modes of argument is to identify the repeating patterns within the mass of individual expressions of value.

4.3 Stefan Collini’s *What Are Universities For?* (2012)

Collini is commonly cited as a key figure in contemporary debates concerning the value of humanities. He has written extensively for the *London Review of Books*, *Times Higher Education*, *The Guardian*, and regularly provides keynotes at conferences addressing the state of the humanities.²² In addition to these less formal interventions, Collini has researched the role and values of the university in England for the past twenty years.²³ He rejects the idea of humanities scholars being forced to become “door-to-door salesmen for vulgarized versions of their increasingly market-oriented ‘products’” (177). In *What Are Universities For?* Collini develops a longer historical narrative of values of higher education, which reveals the nature of the instrumentalised and economic humanities to be a contingency to which there are alternatives.

²² For press, see Collini, S. (19 August 2011); Matthews, D. (24 October 2013). For keynotes see Collini, S. “Holding Our Nerve.” (2010); “The Future of Higher Education in Scotland.” (2011); “Dissidence and Persuasion: Arguing About Universities.” (2015); “Who Does the University Belong To?” (2015); “University English Panel.” (2017).

²³ See also Collini, S. “Against Prodspeak: ‘Research’ in the Humanities” (1999); *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (2006); *What Are Universities For?* (2012); *Speaking of Universities* (2017).

Although Collini acknowledges that we are living “amid difficult and distracting circumstances” (199), *What Are Universities For?* argues that “we are merely the custodians for the present generation of a complex intellectual inheritance which we did not create — and which is not ours to destroy” (199). The sense of historical continuity for Birch, or genealogy for Small, expresses itself for Collini as an inheritance. In an interview with Laurie Taylor for *New Humanist* magazine, 23 February 2013, Collini complains how “we’ve all become too defensive and too nervous” (Taylor).²⁴ He argues that there are no novel ideas required, in order to tackle the challenges of the contemporary, only the revival of old truths. This aligns with Birch’s suggestion that “the more clearly we can see the difficulties that confront us, the most likely it is that we shall find our way through them” (Our Victorian Education 127). Expressions of liberal education in Victorian England form the basis for Collini’s restatement of value including Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, Mill’s *On Liberty* and John H. Newman’s *Idea of the University*. Collini observes how Victorian expressions “illustrate the dynamic whereby passionate engagement with a set of contemporary arguments stirs the author’s eloquence into something that transcends those polemics” (58). Nineteenth-century expressions of the value of a liberal education are used for this purpose throughout this thesis but most extensively in chapter two and chapter three.

What Are Universities For? is a call-to-arms that advocates the value of a liberal education. Collini outlines his approach as a “polemic, which in turn overlaps with the genres of satire, jeremiad, manifesto, and essay in cultural criticism” (xiii). He establishes a humanistic response to the rhetoric of accountability and economic imperatives, arguing that the pursuit of financially profitable results has little

²⁴ More explicitly defensive examples can be found in Barnett, R. (2011); Eagleton, T. (2010).

relevance to valuing the humanities.²⁵ Throughout, Collini enacts the techniques of a literary scholar: close reading and rhetorical interpretation. For example, he specifically addresses the style of communication used by both policymakers and humanities scholars. Speaking of the dominance of economic value in policy and management he observes that “it is remarkable how quickly and easily this language has become naturalized” (17). An attentiveness to the expression of value reveals how the language of policymaking is impoverished. Unpicking the white paper “The Future of Higher Education” (2003), Collini notes that “the whole bullet-point-riddled assemblage is an index of the difficulty which the public language of a contemporary market democracy has with social goods that can neither be quantified nor satisfactorily distributed by means of a market mechanism” (155). As the use of language in educational policy is subjected to economisation, the need for a critique of expression and alternative iterations of value is increasingly important. The first chapter of this thesis interrogates the consequences of economic language in educational policymaking, whilst the third chapter explores an alternative language of value in fiction.

In a keynote address presented as part of the “Why Humanities?” conference at Birkbeck College, London, 5 November 2010, Collini urged humanities scholars to “try to retain a hold on a vocabulary of what we actually do rather than fitting in with current bureaucratic trends” (“Holding Our Nerve”). In *What Are Universities For?* Collini asserts that the value of the humanities is characterised by experiences that the market cannot describe and that it is a scholar’s responsibility to resist the restriction of bullet-points and the wider systems of management that they represent.

²⁵ A similar argument is made in Martha Nussbaum’s *Not for Profit* (2012) in which she insists that economics should not be seen as an endpoint but instead, a means to cultivate and improve humanity on a global scale (10).

This thesis shares Collini's resistance to universities becoming "HiEDBizUK plc." (132) in which the values of higher education are configured as "world-class products at rock-bottom prices" (*What Are Universities For?* 132). Collini's firm hold on Victorian debates concerning educational reform, and his reconsideration of those intellectuals and critics who would seek to foster a liberal education, is a strong methodological approach with which to achieve this aim. This thesis offers articulations of the value of the humanities presented as diverse historically and culturally rich narratives as opposed to lists of bullet-points or budget sheets. The specific ways in which the following four chapters establish alternative models of value are discussed in the outline that follows below.

5.0 Chapter Outline

The four chapters of this thesis each explore a particular relationship that generates value. The overarching research question: “what is the value of the humanities within the contemporary university in England?” is answered in four different fora. I discuss interventions and interpretations of policy in chapter one, the relationship between the humanities and the sciences in chapter two, the productive capacities of fictional representations of humanities scholarship in chapter three, and correspondences in narratives of accountability within the public cultural sector in chapter four. Further detail of the content and argument of each chapter follows.

Chapter one offers a close reading of two policy documents that are representative of a particular kind of economisation within educational policy. A history of Payment by Results is developed through reinterpretation of *The Revised Code of Minutes and Regulations of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education of 1862* (known as *Lowe’s Code*) and *The Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance* (known as the *Browne Report*), 12 October 2010. These two examples of educational policy build a foundation from which the subsequent discussion of value extrapolates. A. J. Marcham counsels: “any analysis of the motives of policy is a hazardous business, and in order to be convincing, it should rest upon the particular ideological, institutional and social context of that policy” (131). Context is key in understanding the particularity of the policies placed under scrutiny in this chapter and therefore, in order to be specific, a chronological approach is developed. Analysis of the two policies provides a strong body of evidence for the shift towards economic valuation of education in government. The chapter also provides an account of the critical responses to policy both in the 1860s

and in the present moment, and in doing so initiates a conversation regarding the abilities of individual humanities scholars to influence national trends.

Chapter two explores the relevance of the two cultures debate. Returning to the infamous exchange between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis offers the opportunity to pay particular attention to the rhetorical expression of value in historical debates between the sciences and the humanities. Understanding the power of recurring modes of rhetoric in public debate is central to this chapter since the division between scientific rationalism and cultural values has deep historical roots. A reconsideration of the two cultures debate opens up the productive potential of agonism in articulations of value. Re-examining a Victorian iteration of the long-held debate between Matthew Arnold and Thomas H. Huxley presents a more amicable consideration of disciplinary knowledge boundaries. In their shared pursuit of a liberal education, the value of the humanities and the sciences is seen to be less oppositional than present policy might regard. Given the present prioritisation of STEM subjects as being nationally useful, this chapter offers an intervention in the myopic language of educational policy. Returning to these famous interdisciplinary exchanges emphasises the plurality of voices and values within higher education.

Chapter three builds on the argument regarding the importance of rhetoric and expression established in chapter two, while turning to fictional representation. The chapter offers an exploration of the ethical values that academic novels can articulate in describing the work of the humanities. Here, fiction is deployed as an alternative language to fiscal policy. Victorian examples, including *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1859), *Middlemarch* (1871-2), and *Jude the Obscure* (1894-5), provide a historical framework for a set of three investigations into literary representations of the value of the humanities. The chapter develops three themes: first,

representations of students' education in the humanities; second, the experience of humanities scholarship; and finally, the relationships between humanities scholars and economic value in fiction. In the literary examples presented, the value of the humanities is animated in a particularly *human* way. This chapter explores the consequences of humanities scholars using skills they already have at their disposal — as trained experts in the art of analysis, interpretation and expression — to develop more productive and characteristic statements on the value of their disciplines. This chapter focuses on literary work that does not write *against* economic valuation culture, but *for* something beyond it. In the face of accountability indices and impact agendas, scholars can no longer rely on arguments of intrinsic value to justify the value of the humanities. However, the language of economics is found to be equally ill-equipped to articulate the value of our disciplines. The potential of an auxiliary option, beyond binary opposition, is demonstrated through the vitality of representations of humanities scholars within the novel form.

Chapter four approaches the value of the humanities in the context of public accountability. As chapter one specifically highlights the seminal changes to teaching in the *Browne Report*, this chapter explores the implications of instrumentality within a restructuring of research assessment. This final chapter represents the most contemporary moment in this thesis with its analysis of the 2014 REF and the 'impact' agenda. In order to do so, the chapter draws a parallel with the history of museum management and accountability within the public cultural sector. There has been much research into the impacts of policy changes within the museum sector, however, this research has not been analysed outside of its original context. I argue that drawing such a parallel provides a clear body of evidence that lies outside the language of policy and humanistic self-defence. This rich narrative counteracts the

deficit of evidence concerning the REF impact criterion. Recognition of similar debates concerning the measurement of impact within the public museum provides valuable testimonies to consider in the near future for the academic humanities. Following this specific history of cultural assessment mechanisms in the UK, I conclude that neither conforming to a purely economic approach nor refusing to be accountable will serve the humanities. Although a wealth of social science research explores the effects of valuation methods and assessment culture, there is a lack of humanities research within this vital field of debate. This chapter raises awareness of the urgent need for humanities scholars to engage in these emerging debates concerning the future of research assessment in England.

The original contribution of this thesis is the critical examination and articulation of the value of the work of humanities in the context of these four various relationships, both within and outside the university. In *What Are Universities For?* (2012), Collini argues that “the humanities embody an alternative set of values in their very rationale” (199), which act in opposition to some of the economic demands of contemporary policymaking. In speaking up for these alternative values *through* their rationale, rather than the rationality of the market, humanities scholars can more effectively intervene in debates concerning definitions of value. Argumentation that solely relies on the terms of debate provided by economic white papers and policy documents represents a state of higher education that does not articulate the *lived* experience of humanities scholarship. The cultivation of an “alternative set of values” (199) to the monoculture of economic valuation in higher education policy is an essential motivation throughout this work.

CHAPTER ONE

A History of Payment by Results: *Lowe's Code* (1862) and the *Browne Report* (2010)

Introduction

This chapter addresses the historical roots of present economic policymaking in higher education. A humanities critique is applied to the process of policymaking by close reading select committee reports, white papers, and Parliamentary debates. To date, a critical history of economic rationale in educational policymaking in England is poorly recorded and seldom discussed at length. In 1950, William F. Connell observed that “a thorough history of the work of the Committee of Council on Education, and in particular, of the Payment by Results scheme, has yet to be written” (203): a statement that is still accurate today. This chapter determines the foundation of the system of Payment by Results within educational reform during the 1860s in order to interrogate the present state of higher education in England.¹ In doing so, I argue that the Payment by Results model of valuation has dominated government policymaking concerning the financing of higher education since 2008. Broadly, Payment by Results is a performance-based system of pay that establishes *minimum* benchmarks of expectation and seeks to measure tangible outcomes in order to calculate success. Highlighting the historical roots of this ideological approach offers insight into current debates concerning value within the humanities. In returning to the formative years, and clarifying the context in which such an approach to policymaking was developed, it is possible to respond with more critical

¹ Although repetitive, “Payment by Results” is capitalised and used throughout this chapter order to draw attention to the use of this term as a proper noun for this public policy instrument.

nuance and historical awareness to the established form of the approach as experienced in higher education in England today.

This chapter traces the production, and re-production, of an economically motivated system in educational policy. In *The Insatiability of Human Wants* (2000) Regenia Gagnier states that “it is necessary to remind ourselves of the ways in which developments in economic thought were contested in the past because we find now that economism – the tendency to interpret all phenomena in market terms — is widespread and influential” (5). In the era of the *Browne Report* (2010) it can be difficult to imagine higher education outside a mindset of “economism” (5). However, the first application of the system of Payment by Results within educational policymaking throughout the 1860s was free from such limitations of vision. Therefore, this chapter develops two distinct vignettes in order to demonstrate the prevalence and power of Payment by Results within the context of educational reform in England: one at the advent of debates in liberal education and the other within the current context of neoliberal education.

The first part of this chapter discusses the financial reform of elementary education under *The Revised Code of Minutes and Regulations of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education* in May 1862 (*Lowe’s Code* henceforth) as the first instance in which a Payment by Results approach was adopted in educational policymaking in England. Debates in Parliament demonstrate a desire to control the cost of elementary education at a time when educational demand was rapidly expanding. David Wardle describes how *Lowe’s Code* “established value for money as the criterion for measuring the educational system, and [...] stood condemned under its own terms” (70). Re-tracing the actions and articulations of educational values in *Lowe’s Code* serves as a reminder that economism is a choice and not a

natural or necessary part of the policymaking process. The second half of this chapter turns to the most recent iteration of Payment by Results within higher education: *The Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance* (the *Browne Report* henceforth), 12 October 2010. The systemic changes that the *Browne Report* initiated, both in terms of government subsidy and the individual financing of higher education creates new tensions for the valuation of the humanities.

Since Payment by Results relies on the assessment of minimum thresholds as opposed to maximums it is an approach that is readily adopted in times of austerity: limited criteria of value makes it cheap to administer. As the system records only minimum levels of success, critics argue that the Payment by Results disregards more aspirational ambitions for education. This approach had more profound effects than simply cost-cutting. Close analysis of how the marketisation of the education sector characterises the approaches of government policymaking reveals the ways in which state processes reconfigure higher education as a private investment as opposed to a public good. This has implications at both a national and an individual level, which is discussed at length in the second half of this chapter.

Sole reliance on the fiscal determinism of a Payment by Results system is an inappropriate register for the assessment of value in education. This chapter provides two examples that are indicative of market-driven economic valuation within educational policymaking practice. I establish a connection between nineteenth and twenty-first-century policymaking and their corresponding critiques, in order to develop an understanding of “the ways in which developments in economic thought were contested in the past” (*The Insatiability of Human Wants* 5) that might advance a critical consideration of educational values in the present.

1.0 *Lowe's Code*

The *Revised Code of Minutes and Regulation of the Committee on the Privy Council of Education*, known as *Lowe's Code*, represents the first instance in which the British government adopted a system of Payment by Results approach on a national scale. Although the policy passed through the House of Commons in 1862, the process began in 1859 with the launch of the Newcastle Commission. The findings published as the "Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the State of Popular Education in England" (1861) provided evidence from which Robert Lowe, 1st Viscount Sherbrooke, and his colleagues at the Privy Council of Education would construct *Lowe's Code*. Therefore, the investigations launched in 1859 represented the formation of the first Payment by Results system in education in England and the start of "thirty-five years of experimentation with educational efficiency" (Rapple 1). The discussion in this section is organised chronologically and characterises the important changes from Commissioners Report, through Parliamentary debates, to the establishment of *Lowe's Code*. The discussion concludes with an analysis of the critical responses of Matthew Arnold and Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, who emphasised the shortcomings of educational assessment that established minimum expectations for financial reward.

1.1 The Newcastle Commission

In 1859, a Royal Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle "to inquire into the present State of Popular Education in England, and to consider and report what Measures, if any, are required for the Extension of sound and cheap elementary Instruction to all Classes of the People" (Newcastle 1). The

Commission published its findings in 1861, proposing a new strategy that would radically alter the economy of education. Throughout the investigation into elementary education, the Newcastle Commission employed fifty-four inspectors, who collectively visited 9,384 daily schools over the course of a year. The inspectors also visited 539 schools for pauper children, 118 Reformatory, Ragged or Industrial Schools and 38 training colleges. In total, the report claims that of the 10,075 schools inspected, 879,773 children were in attendance. Whilst these numbers demonstrate that under the attention of Shuttleworth educational quality and attendance had much improved throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the report nonetheless argued that “not more than one fourth of the children receive a good education” (Newcastle 295).² After sitting for three years, the Committee published its recommendations in a six-volume report. The long and varied accounts of the fifty-four inspectors from regions across England offer a great deal of personal detail into the state of education in elementary schools.

However, given their scope and style, these findings were unwieldy and difficult to interpret as a whole. The report that the Newcastle Commission produced is indicative of the patchy assessment of schooling prior to 1862. Within the Commissioner’s report, the methodologies of assessment varied tremendously: some inspectors provide personal accounts of conversations with members of the public, whilst others list the figures of literacy in each class, tabulated by age. Despite the quantity of information contained in the final report, the Duke of Newcastle and his team of inspectors were unable to provide a substantial framework for decisive action with which to remedy the situation they found. The most conclusive statement from the Commissioner’s report states that “we have

² Shuttleworth served as the first Secretary of the Committee of the Privy Council of Education and established a national system of teacher training colleges during the 1840s.

been obliged to come to the conclusion that the instruction given is commonly both too ambitious and too superficial in its character [...] and often omits to secure a thorough grounding in the simplest but most essential parts of instruction” (293). There was an “obligation” (293) to find a conclusion as opposed to a natural provision of one. The recognition that education was in need of reform is the only absolutely decisive conclusion of the six-volume report, whilst the means to achieving it is not addressed.

Despite its ambiguity, Robert Lowe used the finding of the Newcastle Commission to institute substantial educational reforms. In his chapter on “Culture and the Revised Code” in *The Educational Thought and Influence of Matthew Arnold* (1950), William F. Connell observes that “the dependence of the Revised Code upon the report of the Newcastle Commissioners was made clear in the speech of Vice-President, Robert Lowe, in introducing the first revised version of the original Revised Code” (204). Lowe brought the first version of his code to the House of Commons on 13 February 1862. In this address, Lowe describes how the Newcastle Commission had revealed: “the evils of an inadequate quantum of teaching, a loose test of efficiency, far too expensive machinery, and a decline of the voluntary spirit” (HC Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 214). On balance, the appraisal of elementary education that the Newcastle Commission offered was mixed and revealed a system that was complicated, unbalanced, and expensive. Lowe’s attack on the “inadequate quantum of teaching” was misrepresentative, considering a large number of positive accounts of teaching within the report.³ However, Lowe’s other

³ For example, see Newcastle (1861) commentary on reformatory schools (413), the Royal Carriage schools at Woolwich (422) and parish free schools in Lincoln, Gainsborough &c. (463) are all explicitly described as being “excellent” in the Commissioners report.

criticisms are in accordance with the broad comments included in the extensive Newcastle Commission report.

Before turning to Lowe's reforms, one further passage of the Newcastle Commissioners Report is worth quoting at length. Although much of the report was site-specific and, therefore, difficult to extrapolate from, the following paragraph speaks to wider concerns. The Commissioners recommended the institution of

a searching examination by competent authority of every child in every school [...] to see that all the children under [the teacher's] charge really learned to read, write and cipher thoroughly well [...] and there can be little doubt that [...] if a teacher finds that his income depends on the condition that his scholars do learn to read, whilst another teacher is paid equally well whether they do so or not, the first will teach more children to read than the second [...] the object is to find some constant and stringent motive to induce them to do that part of their duty which is at once most unpleasant and most important. (Newcastle 157)

In this articulation of the apparent need for "a searching examination" (157), the argument for Payment by Results within education in England was born. The system of assessment is designed to provide the "result" of teaching their pupils to "read, write and cipher thoroughly well" (157). This is not an unreasonable minimum expectation of education especially given the lack of national organisation and ad hoc arrangement of schooling at the time. However, what is less clear-cut is the method of assessing this standard of education. Evidencing that one can read, write and solve mathematical problems is dependent on many factors. How can one be

certain that a student is able to read, rather than recite from memory? How should one measure writing as being “thoroughly well” executed or not? What traits should this assessment include? Can the result of one test be indicative of the students’ general aptitudes? These challenging questions cannot be fully answered with the simplicity of the method suggested above, and as critics were soon to observe, it denoted a lack of consideration for such qualitative difficulties.

The Commission proposed the endorsement of a Payment by Results approach because of the poor level of teaching of “the Three R’s” (reading, writing and arithmetic).⁴ This deficiency posed a large problem for elementary schooling, as these rudimentary skills are the foundations of more advanced studies. What is perhaps most surprising to a contemporary reader is the assertion that the reason for the deficiency is that these skills were the “most unpleasant” (Newcastle 157) duty that teachers were required to undertake. The report argues that if a teacher is not paid directly to teach the Three R’s, then they are “bound” (157) to neglect them. Such assertions were not unusual at the time; prior to the commission’s findings in 1861, evidence of sporadic teaching is frequently found in the annual reports of school inspectors. Reverend J. P. Norris offers a particularly prominent example in his *General Report for the Year 1858 in the Counties of Chester, Salop and Stafford*. Norris makes specific reference to how “the task of geography and history is far easier and less irksome than that of teaching to read and write” and urges that “teachers should give their principal attention to these essential subjects” (qtd. in Newcastle 248). Therefore, Payment by Results was partially invented to ensure that

⁴ The Three Rs are rumoured to have been coined by William Curtis, who is described in the most unflattering manner as “a portly and bottlenosed *bon vivant* and unconscious buffoon” in Thorne, R. (1986). It is claimed that during an after-dinner speech for the Board of Education around 1795, Curtis humorously slurred the words “*reading, riting, and rithmetic*” (qtd. in Timbs 75).

teachers were fulfilling a minimum expectation of educative responsibility. The Newcastle Commissioner's report insisted that "the object [of policymakers] is to find some constant and stringent motive to induce [teachers] to do that part of their duty" (157). This foundational desire to create a uniform and democratic, albeit limited, system of elementary education is predicated upon the belief that access to basic schooling was a national imperative and responsibility. The Commissioners report records how,

three-fourths after leaving school forget everything they have learnt there; and we are desirous to suggest inducements by which the schoolmaster, while still chiefly interested in completing his work with his elder scholars, shall find it worth his while to give that sound foundation to the younger boys, which shall enable them, if so minded, afterwards to complete their education for themselves. (Newcastle 321)

The Newcastle Commission found that students had forgotten how to read and write after leaving education; therefore, it is not only the content of an education that was forgotten but also the means to pursuing further learning. The desperate need to be able to assess a level of competency in a complicated system is evident in the Newcastle Commission's recommendation of the Payment by Results approach. The government sought to bring order to a fragmented and uneven system and the inspectors identified the 3 R's as a primary means by which to begin this national educational reform.

Such democratising aspirations were not inherently economic and the desire for greater organisation and better teaching quality should not be condemned as

unnecessary in the context of the fragmented and expanding school system in the mid-nineteenth century. However, Lowe's decision to pursue a policy that was built on an extremely limited model of assessment demonstrates that his principal desire was for reform to aid economic control and administrative efficiency. Undeterred by the indiscriminate findings of the Newcastle Commission, Lowe keenly assumed the task of reforming the structures of elementary education in England as he saw fit. The following section explores Lowe's particular influences and the consequences of economic motivations shaping educational policymaking.

1.2 Robert Lowe and Economic Motivations

Although the need for greater organisation is explicitly presented in the Newcastle Commissioner's report, the investigation into elementary schooling was motivated by a different, although somewhat contingent, demand. By 1860, the government was in desperate need of financial retrenchment and the requirement for economic scrupulousness resided within the original request of the Newcastle Commission. The task appointed to the Duke of Newcastle was to recommend potential improvements for "the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction" (4). For Lowe, and others in the Committee on the Privy Council of Education, "sound *and* cheap" (4 my italics) fulfilled the requirement of "a minimum standard of education" (Lowe, HC Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 237). The use of "sound" in the request of the Newcastle Commission is indicative of the governmental interest in attaining a level of sufficiency rather than an interest in high quality education. Furthermore, the direct implication of "cheap" demonstrates that any suggestions or improvements needed to be relational to reductions in cost. An economic interest

plays an important part in the changes to education that were implemented by *Lowe's Code*. Throughout the period of debate and revision in Parliament, Lowe persistently asserted the benefits of Payments by Results as the preferred system of assessment. In order to implement order into education at elementary level, Lowe argued that "a minimum of education" (HC Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 237) was the most important factor to assess.

At this juncture, it is significant to note that Lowe is not remembered as a great reformer of education, but rather for his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1868-73 under Prime Minister William Gladstone. Lowe's legacy is his rationalist approach to policymaking; Connell observes how he "abhorred administrative untidiness and longed to see [his] work based logically with Benthamite purity and simplicity, upon a few clear principles" (208). Lowe's intention in 1861 was to both organise and economise the system of elementary education.

Under Payment by Results, financial rewards are provided for successful performance within specific criteria of assessment: above all else, a focus on basic utility saturates this approach. Lowe was greatly inspired by the economic theory of Adam Smith and believed that "education is no exception to the rules of Political Economy" (Lowe, Letter to Sir John Simon, 31 October 1868), frequently referencing Smith's thinking in discussions of educational reform.⁵ Lowe's inclusion of education as a field that is suitable for economisation is unsurprising given his belief in the universal applicability of Smith's economic principles. In "Private Versus Public Education: A Classical Economic Dispute" (1964) Edwin West documents how "Lowe felt that Smith's presumption that competition was necessary to overcome the natural desire of every man to live as much at his ease as he could, was sincerely

⁵ See Lowe, R. (1868) *Middle Class and Primary Education*.

intended as a universal principle” (472). Lowe’s Smithian perspective saw education as the responsibility of the parent and not the state, and the rise of competition within school assessment as being a means with which to induce teachers (prone to the pursuit of an easy life) to offer a sufficient level of education at the lowest price. Therefore, Payment by Results was instituted in England during the 1860s as an economically motivated ideology that aspired towards a utilitarian efficiency. Huriya Jabbar argues that “Lowe’s emphasis on technical efficiency, and his reliance on incentives rather than mandates to induce teachers to improve student achievement, suggest[s] an approach to policy that arose out of his particular applications of economics to education rather than the general climate” (228). As a proponent of liberal free trade who primarily understood policy from an economic perspective, Lowe believed that education should be understood as a commodity, and like any other, could be managed through the application of an efficient political economy.

The belief that all aspects of society can be managed as a free market is, to humanities scholars and educators alike, a categorical error. Lowe’s disregard for the idea that teaching ability might be motivated by anything other than financial incentive is particularly extreme. Helen Small identifies how Lowe’s personal experience of complacent educators during his education at Winchester College likely “intensified his contempt for the low general standard of university education” (71). Lowe wrote how “no occupation [is] more likely to degenerate into lifeless routine and meaningless repetition” (*Middle Class Education* 8) than teaching. There is no evidence that Lowe understood that an individual’s experience of education, as a student or as a teacher, could be potentially transformative or inspirational. Although, of course, Lowe is not the sole reason that Payment by Results was

adopted in England in 1862, his personal experiences and perspective on economic theory should be acknowledged, given his vital role in the policymaking process.

National spending on elementary education had been steadily increasing throughout the 1850s. This was largely owing to the excessive administrative processes that were insufficiently organised to deal with a large number of personal enquiries over salary and grant payment in schools. The Newcastle Commission identified the “complication of the business” (328) of education as being in need of major redress. By 1859 the annual government expense in education grants was in excess of £723,000. Compared to national expenditure at the time, this was a relatively small cost: in the same year the price of the Crimean War (1853-56) was approaching £78,000,000.⁶ The high financial cost of the war played a significant role in the need for cutbacks in public spending during Gladstone’s government throughout the 1860s. “Gladstone took over a £5 million deficit” (Jenkins 215) as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1859 and therefore the need for reducing government spending was imperative. Connell suggests that “the real genesis of the Revised Code [*Lowe’s Code*] lay in the current demand for the retrenchment [of] the inflated income tax that had been built up during the Crimean War” (206). Brendan Rapple concurs: “the run on the coffers due to the Crimean War” meant that in educational policy at the time it “was a *sine qua non* that it would be cheap” (3). Such accusations of purely fiscal intent ignore the moral interests that were present in the Newcastle Commissioner’s report. The focus on financial savings did not appear to motivate the initial commission, which stated that, in terms of state grants to

⁶ The *Advocate of Peace* (1869) documented “crushing taxes, an augmented national debt, and expensive floating liabilities” 117. For history of loans in Crimean War see Curtis, S. J. (1963) 249.

education, “it would not be desirable either to withdraw it or largely diminish its amount” (Newcastle 297).

However, the reforms of Lowe’s Code made the prioritisation of economism clear. In an article published in *History of Education*, 1979, A. J. Marcham argues that “the principal object of the Revised Code [*Lowe’s Code*] was what it appeared to be when it was introduced, to save money” (“Recent Interpretations” 132). In the context of the wider socio-political landscape articulated above, such a claim is difficult to dismiss. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, some scholars argued that this period of reform in the educational system in England had been misrepresented. For example, Rapple describes how several modern historians take

a revisionist view of 19th century payment by results, argue that a better system would have been extremely difficult to institute considering the context of the time and, anyway, that it was a system by no means deserving of the generally hostile criticism which it engendered. (311)

As a result, Marcham was criticised for over-emphasising the desire to cut costs in policymaking practice. Since such claims might well be levied against the narrative outlined above, I will briefly address these concerns. Laaden Fletcher offers a clear demonstration of this kind of historical defence of Lowe’s tactics. In “A Further Comment on Recent Interpretations of the Revised Code, 1862” (1981), Fletcher argues that “if we judge him for his actions at that time we should do so simply as a Minister of Education faced with pressures of crisis proportion and limited options, and should recognize at least the logic of the case he presented” (31). I argue, with Marcham, that this revisionist view of history is problematic both in terms of

methodology and its conclusions. The benefit of hindsight can neglect the particularity of feeling in the nineteenth century. We should not apply twenty-first-century logic to nineteenth-century debate. Such revisionist articles argue that economisation was not the primary intention of reform, which given Lowe's personal political commitment and the state of the Treasury at the time, is hard to endorse.⁷

Further evidence of the economisation of education is found in a speech that Granville George Leveson-Gower (the Second Earl Granville) made in the House of Lords, 13 February 1862. He outlines the strict economic links to successful scholarship that *Lowe's Code* proposed. Granville describes the state grants offered to schools under the initial proposal as follows: "one third [...] of the sum thus claimable is forfeited if the scholar fails to satisfy the inspector in reading, one-third, if in writing, and one-third in arithmetic" and emphasises that "if they fail in all, the State will contribute nothing towards the maintenance of the school" (HL Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 173). The proposed system of assessment of elementary education was divided into three equal parts; the limited tests would be relatively easy to administer and would lead to a greater consistency in inspectors' reports. Here, an observable leap has been made from the recommendations of the Newcastle Commission to the creation of *Lowe's Code*. Whilst in its initial imagination of Payment by Results, the Commission was keen to find "some constant and stringent motive to induce" (Newcastle 157) teachers to engage students in essential studies, it seems that their metaphor of payment was taken quite literally by policymakers. By 1861, grants were to be administered "on sufficiently stringent conditions" (HC Deb 11 July 1861 vol. 164 col. 734) and thus an

⁷ For critical dismissal of the idea that *Lowe's Code* was motivated by economisation see Morris, N. (1970) 19; Fletcher, L. (June 1974) 84; Sylvester, D.W. (1974) 80-82; Fletcher, L. (March 1981).

idea initially conceived to motivate teachers became mandatory. Performance related pay is identified as an example in the Newcastle Report, not an endorsement or a clear proposition. Regardless of the original intention of the Commission, the “constant and stringent motive” (Newcastle 157) was henceforth integrated into law as a monetary reward.

The proliferation of the language of economic utility is frequently found in discussions of the revisions to educational policy at the time. Granville exhibits an exemplary economic register in his speech to the House of Lords. For instance, he rejoices how “the result [...] will be contemporaneous with enormously increased efficiency in the schools, and with a great increase in the amount of useful instruction received by the children” (HL Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 174). Once more the “amount” of educational knowledge being transmitted is the principal concern, as opposed to the quality. The language that Granville uses to discuss schooling is wholly economic: “increase”, “efficiency”, “amount”, and “useful[ness]” are its primary objectives. It is unsurprising that, in a time of financial retrenchment, Lowe’s economically driven project was popular in government. Those with sensitivities towards efficiency welcomed the suggestion that the chaotic system of assessment in elementary education might be curbed into three easily defined areas of knowledge.

Affirmation of this economised view of the Payments by Results method is explicated in a letter written in 1882 from Lowe to Ralph Lingen (then Permanent Secretary of the Education Department 1849-70). Reflecting upon the last twenty years under which the system of Payment by Results had dominated the assessment of elementary education, Lowe describes the economic perspective of his approach in some detail. The letter admits how he chose a system that “was

more a financial than a literary preference” (Letter to Ralph Lingen 17 March 1882). This, Lowe continues, enabled “useful knowledge” with “precision” to be administered in elementary schools. This definition typifies Lowe’s view of the structures of elementary education requiring efficiency. For Lowe, “the Three R’s” were the most useful knowledge available in elementary education. This is not, as the Newcastle Commission identified, because these subjects were the foundational blocks in the educative process, but rather because they conveniently provided “an amount of knowledge which could be ascertained thoroughly by examination” (Lowe, Letter to Ralph Lingen 17 March 1882). Use, for Lowe, was not a foundational starting point or an element in a complicated world of compounds: use was the result. Under *Lowe’s Code*, any “amount” of knowledge that could not be accurately and “thoroughly” assessed was useless to the government’s grants body.

Under *Lowe’s Code* educational grants to schools were “on average reduced [by] two-fifths” (Shuttleworth, Letter to Earl Granville 4). In “The Cult of Efficiency in Education: Comparative Reflections on the Reality and the Rhetoric” (1998) Anthony Welch charts how “the scheme had a profoundly depressing effect upon both monies expended by the state upon elementary education (the grant fell from £813,441 in 1861 to £636,806 in 1865) and also heralded a precipitous decline in numbers of pupil teachers and teachers’ college trainees” (165). *Lowe’s Code* directly reduced the costs associated with financing education and indirectly demotivated a generation of prospective educators. In his 1867 general report on Elementary Schools, Matthew Arnold described how “in 1861, [there was] one pupil-teacher for every thirty-six scholars; in 1866 it was one pupil teacher for every fifty-four scholars” (Arnold, *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882* 111). Arnold argues that this drop in student-teacher ratio was accompanied by a decline in the quality of

education provided. His report directly attributes the change to *Lowe's Code* lamenting that,

the mode of teaching in the primary schools has certainly fallen off in intelligence, spirit, and inventiveness during the four or five years which have elapsed since my last report [...] In a country where everyone is prone to rely too much on mechanical processes, and too little on intelligence, a change in the Education Department's regulations, which by making two-thirds of the Government grant depend upon a mechanical examination, inevitably gives a mechanical turn to school teaching, a mechanical turn to the inspection, is and must be trying to the intellectual life of a school. (121)

Marcham observes how Payment by Results is "normally regarded by educationists as retrogressive and by administrators as advantageous" ("Recent Interpretations" 132). The system implemented in 1862 made the system of governance efficient and cheap, as it simultaneously reduced the qualities of an education to a mechanical process with a culture of minimum values. Arnold observed a correlation between the reform of value assessment in education, in the adoption of Payment by Results, and the "mechanical turn to school teaching" (*Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-188* 121). Further analysis of the critical response from Arnold to the reallocation of teaching grants, alongside the interventions of James Kay Shuttleworth, are addressed in the following section.

1.3 Critical Responses to Payment by Results

Such an economised system has obvious neglects; with the gain of efficiency of administration and assessment came the loss of creative practice and concern for quality. As a consequence, there was significant public and political debate surrounding the educational reforms during 1861-62. Shuttleworth and Arnold were among the loudest campaigners against *Lowe's Code*. Arnold's "The Twice-Revised Code", published in *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1862, was written in support of Shuttleworth's "Letter to Earl Granville, K.C., on The Revised Code", July 1861. Although Shuttleworth's letter was arguably "the most powerful and important pamphlet that appeared early in the controversy" (Connell 211) it was written in technical language, was over 80 pages long, and was primarily designed to address politicians who were already aware of the debate. As Arnold states in his introduction to the "Twice-Revised Code", although Shuttleworth's attack on the adoption of Payment by Results is well founded, it is "too copious" (212) for a general reader. Arnold realised that his strength as a cultural communicator would make the subject more widely accessible. In a letter to his mother, dated 26 February 1862, Arnold describes how he had set about "presenting the subject in its *essence*, free from those details with which it is generally encumbered, and which make 'outsiders' so afraid of it" (*Letters of Matthew Arnold* 185 italics original). The "Twice-Revised Code" is an elegantly argued and entertaining extrapolation of educational theory and debate. Arnold clearly identifies Lowe as a "political economist" ("Twice-Revised Code" 243) as opposed to an educational reformer. He argues that *Lowe's Code* was legislation intended to organise, economise, and constrain elementary education into a mechanical system. However, rather than setting a minimum standard for quantified learning, Arnold aspired towards a "*general intellectual*

cultivation" (224 italics original) for all children in England. This, he argued was a "debt and a duty on the State's part" (240 italics original).

Arnold identified three main problems with *Lowe's Code* in "The Twice-Revised Code". First, he argued that the method of assessment proposed fostered automatism instead of intelligence; second, that the system was damaging to the teaching profession; and third, that the policy was informed by an interest in economics as opposed to qualities of a liberal education. In broader terms, these three grievances stand in opposition to the establishment of a culture of minimum rather than maximum valuation of education. Payments by Results, under the government of 1862, sought to establish an efficient but rudimentary test for elementary education and little more. The proposed system demanded a small and precise amount of knowledge to be assessed. This set of specific criteria limited the role of the school inspector to carrying out a mechanical process. In a particularly animated hyperbole, Arnold aligns the classroom with a battalion in an army, and school inspectors to the rank of generals. *Lowe's Code*, he allegorises, "is as if the generals of an army [...] were to have their duties limited to inspecting men's cartouch-boxes" ("Twice-Revised Code" 235).⁸ The limited and minimal assessment criteria are seen to neglect many of the other important factors of education institutions. He continues: "the camp is ill-drained, the men are ill-hutted, there is danger of fever and sickness. Never mind; inspect the cartouch-boxes! But the whole discipline is out of order, and needs instant reformation: - no matter; inspect the cartouch-boxes!" (235). For Arnold, measuring minimum standards in limited subject areas jeopardises the wider project of education. The metaphor of the army is an effective image, with the inference that, like the military forces, schools are

⁸ A cartouch-box is a pouch as part of the military uniform that was purely ornamental of Britain from 1840 onwards.

responsible for the defence of national interests. It is also perhaps a shaded criticism of the amount of money spent in the Crimean War in comparison to the relatively small cost of education. Choosing to assess only a limited and precisely specified *amount* of knowledge was a dangerous approach in Arnold's opinion; he argued that teachers would not be motivated to educate pupils to their highest potential but rather instead to conform to the expected regulations of government assessment. Small describes how, for Arnold, "an education is of value in its deepest civilizing and life-long effects, not primarily for its turning out of functional literates" (*The Value of the Humanities* 74). Arnold argued that under the revisions of *Lowe's Code* "the Teacher [...] is led to think, not about teaching his subject, but about managing to hit those requirements" (qtd. in Connell 225). The tension between Lowe and Arnold was because of an entirely dissimilar belief and approach to the valuation of education.

The impact of Arnold's "Twice-Revised Code" is difficult to measure. As with the creation and revision of any government policy, a large number of agents and agendas shaped the effects and implications. However, before *Lowe's Code* was finalised in the summer of 1862, a copy of the "Twice-Revised Code", thinly veiled in anonymity, was sent to every member of both of the Houses of Parliament. One significant amendment in the February 1862 session of Parliament was that "[a] third of the grant instead of none at all, was to depend solely upon a pupil's attendance" (Connell 217). Therefore, the limited criterion for payment was widened to include attendance, a small concession towards engaging students as individuals through recognition of their participation in education. Arnold and Shuttleworth could not stop the implementation of Payment by Results across all elementary education in England, and Arnold would continue to protest against the system for over thirty

years until his death in 1888. In his school inspection report in 1867, Arnold describes “a deadness, a slackness, and a discouragement which are not the signs and accomplishments of progress [...] certainly to be attributed to the school legislation of 1862” (Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 102). It is tragic, or perhaps a fitting memorial, that in the year of Arnold’s death the tide turned against the system of Payment by Results in elementary education in England.

Throughout the late 1800s, the system adopted under *Lowe’s Code* was continually revised and eventually dismissed entirely. In 1888, the Cross Commission reported that “we are unanimously of the opinion that the system of ‘payment by results’ is carried too far and too rigidly applied, and that it ought to be modified and relaxed in the interests equally of the scholars, of the teachers, and of education itself” (Cross 183). From the stringent economic base of *Lowe’s Code*, the policymakers reformed and revised the system of elementary education.⁹ The acknowledgement of the need for a more “relaxed” approach to teaching went some way to heal the damaged relationship between public inspectors and educators. However, as Howard Barnard observes “a feeling of hostility [...] outlived the system of ‘payment by results’” (131). Shuttleworth commented retrospectively in his *Memorandum on Popular Education* (1868) that “the Revised Code has constructed nothing; it has only pulled down” (30), a feeling that Arnold shared. From the outset, Lowe confessed limitations of his revision in an address to the House of Commons: “I cannot promise the House that this system will be an economical one, and I cannot promise that it will be an efficient one, but I can promise that it shall be either one or the other. If it is not cheap it shall be efficient; if it is not efficient it shall be cheap” (HC Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 col. 229). The two main concerns Lowe

⁹ See *Forster’s Act* (1870) and *The New Code* (1890) which reverses *Lowe’s Code’s* legislation.

observed in the structures of elementary education were inefficiency and economic cost.

These were undoubtedly faults in the education system that *Lowe's Code* addressed. Lowe's view of the landscape of elementary education was always from an administrative and economic perspective and in this regard he was successful. Arnold and Shuttleworth's admonishment is rooted in the neglect of the qualitative and ambiguous systems inherent within the processes of education. In "Mr Walter and Schoolmasters' Certificates", an article published anonymously in the *London Review* 11 April 1863, Arnold argued that "Mr Lowe was never weary of disparaging all securities except this one security of results; he could not sufficiently scout the motion of paying for the 'means' instead of solely paying for 'results'" (259).¹⁰ Arnold's accusation is that only things that are visibly available for measurement are elected as the benchmark for success. This valid observation present throughout "Twice-Revised Code" identifies the principle difficulty facing the security of the "free creative activity [...] the highest function of man" (*Function of Criticism* 28) of education. In the pursuit of knowledge (and by relation, for Arnold, contentment) the Payment by Results system of the 1860s flattened education to a system of minimal expectations and financial motive.

The use of Payment by Results in education slowly diminished at the end of the nineteenth century, and by 1897 had been fully removed. The focus on the "Three Rs" had diminished and more subjects were included in school curricula, the assessment of all individual students was relaxed to a broader inspection of the school. Alongside the Cross Commission, above, the "Code of Regulations for Day Schools" in 1895 was a turning point in the minimal assessment of education. For

¹⁰ Arnold's authorship was identified through his quarterly accounts. See "Mr Walter and Schoolmasters' Certificates" 257-61.

example, in infant schools, the 1895 code instituted “a variable grant of 2s., 4s., or 6s. [...] having regard to the provision made for (1) suitable instruction in the elementary subjects, (2) simple lessons on objects and on the phenomena of nature and of common life, and (3) appropriate and varied occupations” (Committee of Council on Education 18). A far wider field of subjects were included in the inspections, which demonstrates an interest in a richer and more varied educational experience. In particular, the adoption of object lessons challenged the tedium of learning by rote, making schooling a more immersive and active experience.¹¹ By 1895, additional grants were available for the following subjects in day schools for older students: English, or Welsh (in Wales), or French (in the Channel Islands), Geography, Elementary Science, History, Object lessons, Suitable Occupations, Needlework and Domestic Economy (the latter two for girls only).

Re-tracing the rise and fall of Payments by Results teaches present day humanities scholars several things. First, that is entirely possible, and indeed historically evidenced, that a national system of economised education can be reversed through the very same policymaking process with which it was instituted. Second, it demonstrates how nineteenth-century efficiency and economism within education was a personal preference of some policymakers as opposed to being seen as the purpose of government itself. The wider context of costs, such as the Crimean War and the need for economic retrenchment, meant that Payment by Results was adopted at that particular moment in time. It is worth noting that these conditions were not shaped by an interest in education but rather economics. The ensuing responses from Shuttleworth and Arnold demonstrate that an individual

¹¹ Elizabeth Mayo’s *Lessons on Objects* (1866) describes how the prevailing aim of object lessons was “to exercise the faculties of children according to their natural order of development, aiming also at their harmonious cultivation” (6).

interrogation of the process of policy can lead to a clearer articulation of the results, particularly when they are placed within a richer explanatory context. Although the reversal of *Lowe's Code* was slow, the criticisms of the day played a productive role in its eventual abolition. These are all considerations that apply to the *Browne Report* as will be presently discussed in part two of this chapter. How has the process of policymaking affected the result? Who are the beneficiaries of this economism? What might humanities scholars bring to an appraisal of Payment by Results in higher education? The following section pursues these questions, building upon the evidence and experience of policy reform in the 1860s.

2.0 The *Browne Report*

The focus of the enquiry now moves from the Victorian period to the present day. Shifting from the foundations of Payment by Results instigated in 1862, I shall presently define the conditions of higher education finance that were set into motion in 2009. The *Browne Report*, like *Lowe's Code* in its time, is an important milestone in the history of education in England. The report was a reiteration of the system of Payment by Results, but unlike the previous example, one that impacted the higher education sector. Moving between these two examples (*Lowe's Code* as foundational and most basic to the *Browne Report* as an advanced iteration) exposes circumstantial differences. For example, Victorian elementary education was increasingly supported by state finance and educational reforms throughout the mid-nineteenth century attempted to make attendance compulsory.¹² Derek Gillard describes how “by 1851 the average length of school attendance had risen to two years, and in 1861 an estimated 2.5m children out of 2.75m received some form of schooling” (*Education in England*). By comparison, contemporary higher education is a non-compulsory consumer choice financed by invested stakeholders in the business of education. Therefore, *Lowe's Code* and the *Browne Report* should be understood to belong to their historical moment and as a product of their times. Nonetheless, as forms of Payment by Results, these two examples are among the most significant and vividly disputed moments in the ideological history of the system of English education. Considering them side-by-side can yield productive reflections.

In “The Cult of Efficiency in Education”, Welch presents a convincing argument concerning the resemblance between *Lowe's Code* and the “recent and ongoing

¹² Most famously in the Elementary Education Act of 1870 (known as Forster's Act) but see also previous reform in the Factory Act (1833).

reform movements in the UK and Australia” (165). However, he does not investigate any specific act or policy document within his discussion of contemporary higher education. Welch’s analysis of *Lowe’s Code* reveals that the policy “coalesced around an agenda of cost containment, an increased business influence, [...] and an instrumental concern with enhanced system performance” (165). In relating the past iteration of Payment by Results with the present, Welch’s study only goes as far as to identify how the white paper “Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge” (1987) explicitly promoted that higher education should take “increasing account of the economic requirements of the country” (2). Welch correctly observes the echoes in the rhetoric from the educational debate in the 1860s within neoliberal management techniques since the 1980s.¹³ However, he does not consider the productive potential of analysis of corresponding critiques, nor does he seek to address the particular implications of these effects upon the contemporary higher education sector. I offer an analysis of policy that is not only comparative in a contextual sense, but also in terms of its attentiveness to the processes of governance and the potential for humanistic critique.

As a result of this ambition, this section explores the formation and implementation of the *Browne Report*, demonstrating how it mirrors the structure and motivations of policymaking concerning *Lowe’s Code*. The analysis begins with a summary of the purposes of the independent review and continues to explore the implementation of the review’s findings, which were published on 12 October 2010 in a document called “Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education” (the *Browne Report* henceforth). With this context established, the discussion turns to criticisms

¹³ A contemporary history of neoliberalism (1980-present) is provided in chapter four with a discussion of New Public Management, accountability cultures and impact assessment.

and responses from those working within the university. This response principally consists of humanities scholars who critique the adoption of a free market for higher education. The connections and correspondences between *Lowe's Code* and the *Browne Report* are at times explicit, while elsewhere is less straightforward. The tensions and challenges in this attempt to draw these two policies into correspondence are developed in the conclusion of this chapter. As discussed in reference to Dinah Birch's *Our Victorian Education* in the introduction, the interconnection between Victorian policies and the present day can be illuminating even when they are not directly analogous.

2.1 Contextualising the *Browne Report*: The Move Towards Minimal Government Involvement in Higher Education

By the twenty-first century, England had experienced a publicly funded higher education system for nearly fifty years. The "Higher Education Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins 1961-63" (known as the *Robbins Report*) actively argued that universities "should encourage the cultivation of high excellence" (Robbins 265), presenting an ambition for maximal rather than minimal standards of education. The *Robbins Report* suggested that there should be "an increase in public expenditure on full-time higher education from £206 million in 1962/3 to £742 million in 1980/1" (Robbins 273). It explicitly advised against a system of private funding because this could "deter parents [...] from persuading, encouraging or allowing their children to proceed to Higher Education" (274). The late-twentieth century and, even more so, the early-twenty-first has seen great changes to the structures of higher education. Since the

1960s, student numbers have more than quadrupled, growing from around 400,000 full-time students in the 1960s to over 2.3 million in 2017.¹⁴

During the 1990s there was a gradual increase in the amount of money paid by students in the form of student loans and tuition fees. A National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education produced “Higher Education in the Learning Society” (known as the *Dearing Report*) in 1997. This white paper represented a significant milestone in public policy that moved away from blanket government funding for undergraduate education. The *Dearing Report* established a student contribution towards tuition fees of up to £1,000 from 1998 and was instituted to relieve some of the burden of finances from public budgets to the private investor. The connection between the policy of the Dearing and Browne’s reports is well documented. For example, Gill Wyness’ survey of “Policy Changes in UK Higher Education Funding 1963-2009” (2010) explains that “Dearing’s main aim was to bring more money into the sector” (11). Although this article was published prior to the *Browne Report*, Wyness correctly anticipates how “given the current economic circumstances, perhaps the most important issue arising from the [Browne] review will be how to expand the HE system while cutting costs to the exchequer” (14). The *Browne Report* was framed as an economic manifesto for the future of higher education. The proposed policy offered a radical departure from the previous models of finance in its aim to reduce “the pressure on public spending” (Browne 3). The *Browne Report* cites Dearing’s work as fruitful while Robbins’ more liberal and democratic vision is not mentioned. Within the *Browne Report*, Dearing’s report is celebrated because it “focused on the role of higher education in contributing to international economic competitiveness” (Browne 18). This historical preference, favouring of Dearing over

¹⁴ Total number of UK/EU Higher Education part-time and full-time students in England according to Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Robbins, is a clear indicator of the fiscal incentives behind the changes implemented through the *Browne Report*. Dearing's vision is cited as the initiation of the model to "create genuine competition for students between HEIs" (8) that the *Browne Report* intended to implement on a national scale. The following section explores the motivations for economic efficiency within the higher education sector.

2.2 National Economic Motivations

An immediate history of the *Browne Report* begins with Lord Peter Mandelson's first speech regarding higher education as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, 27 July 2009. Speaking at Birkbeck, University of London, he stated that "higher education is not cheap", asserting that the country "had to face up to the challenge of paying for excellence" ("Higher Education and Modern Life"). The language of this speech makes it explicit that Mandelson's primary interest in policymaking intervention in higher education was principally concerned with lowering its financial cost. The commissioning of the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance was the means by which to tackle this challenge. In November 2009, Lord Browne of Madingley was appointed to lead a review of fees and funding of higher education institutions. Mandelson requested that Browne "examine the balance of contributions to universities by taxpayers, students, graduates and employers" (HC Deb. 9 Nov 2009 vol. 499 col. 4WS). The nature of this initial request to "examine the balance of the contributions" of education pre-empted any element of surprise at the financial focus of this report. Lord Browne, much like Lowe himself, is an economist best known for being the chief executive of multinational oil and gas company BP (1995-2007).

The circumstances in which a demand for economisation emerged are equally similar to the context of *Lowe's Code*. Although the *Browne Report* was commissioned under a Labour government in 2009, it reported to the Coalition government (2010-15), with Vince Cable replacing Mandelson as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in May 2010. The context was, as with *Lowe's Code*, that of economic retrenchment. Stefan Collini observed in the *London Review of Books*, 4 November 2010, how the coalition was “using the whipped-up frenzy about the deficit in the public finances as a cover for a recognisably ideological assault on all forms of public provision” (“Browne’s Gamble” 25). Once more, the context of austerity was the setting for the adoption of Payment by Results as an effective and efficient means of value judgement in the education sector.

The *Browne Report* makes no efforts to conceal its process of cost-cutting. The report explains: “in our proposals, public spending reductions are made by removing the blanket subsidy [...] for all courses” (Browne 27). The *Browne Report* is driven by an interest in the economics of education and finds no anxiety in speaking in solely fiscal terms. The statement that “higher education matters” is justified as follows: “higher education matters because it drives innovation and economic transformation” (Browne 14). University education and research is valued as a means to build a stronger economy. Some public investment remains, but only “to support priority courses and the wider benefits they create” (Browne 25). This change to the financial relationship between state and universities is significant. In this allocation of support, politicians behaved more like private investors than as part of a public support system, directing money where it saw the opportunity for direct profit or “wider benefits” (25). Such statements suggested that knowledge, and by extension higher education, was only deemed valuable when it has a direct use or is of immediate

profit to the economy. The changes to block grants in 2010 meant that the government no longer provided funding for any taught undergraduate courses in the humanities or social sciences.

In allowing the market to dominate the financing of universities, the only assurance of any public money was for “priority courses” (Browne 8). These courses are generally based around skills that are in high demand in the public sector, for example, “courses in science and technology subjects, clinical medicine, nursing and other healthcare degrees” (Browne 47). According to the *Browne Report*, these are “the courses [that] are a priority for the public interest” (47) whilst education in the humanities and arts courses are left in omission, signifying their positioning as a consumer choice. In an interview with *The Telegraph*, 18 September 2010, Cable explained that although politicians cannot directly control universities they “can create a framework in which universities that don’t deliver will be subject to financial discipline. They will be operating in a market” (“Universities Will Get Less”). The image of delivery emphasises the outcome-driven conception of value. Cable’s comment also acknowledges that externally imposed governance structures and frameworks can profoundly alter the way in which universities operate. A reliance on market rationality is indicative of the government seeking to avoid defining higher education as a public good in itself.

In a context in which many public services are shifting towards becoming private corporations, it is not surprising that higher education is facing a similar future.¹⁵ However, few academics anticipated the extremes of this change in the complete removal of public funding of the block grants to the arts, humanities, and

¹⁵ Some prominent examples include British Telecoms (1984), national rail networks under the Railways Act (1993), and the Royal Mail (2014).

social sciences. This economisation is a symptom of the government's desire to make cuts to the budget rather than to improve the quality of higher education in the long term. The *Browne Report* explicitly states that the government benefits from being "less involved" (Browne 9) with the higher education sector by requiring "less regulation" (9). Therefore, it should be understood that the *Browne Report* was motivated by the desire to reduce public spending and deregulate the "marketplace of ideas", to borrow Louis Menand's expression. The report explains that "we are reducing the reliance of the system on funding from Government and control by Government" (Browne 46). Then-Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, was accused of influencing the review panel, which was supposed to be independent of departmental interests. A report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) released on the same date as the *Browne Report*, 12 October 2010, provided an independent analysis of the proposals. The IFS confirmed that "the public purse would be the main beneficiary of the proposed reforms", and explain how "the exchequer [...] would save up to £6,000 on the cost of a degree for each student" (IFS). Whether the review was truly independent of government or not, the results were clearly in favour of limited spending on higher education in the public budget book.

The immediate consequences of adopting this private model of student finance were twofold. First, the revelation that government subsidy would only be offered to subjects that produced tangible services in the national economy prompted widespread concern amongst scholars in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The *Browne Report* made concrete what had previously been a growing suspicion: that higher education was being considered as a national commodity. Second, there was a noticeable reallocation of financial responsibility in terms of tuition being largely paid for by individual students. The rise in data concerning student

satisfaction and league tables testifies to this change. The specific effects of this iteration of Payment by Results will be addressed in the following two sections. After a consideration of how government retrenchment in public spending reconfigures the value of higher education as a service industry for the provision of skills, I reflect on the potentially productive space of individual student values. The tension between neoliberal governance and the aspirations for a liberal education is key in exploring the implications of these changes.

2.3 National Gains: The Debate Concerning Tangible Knowledge

The *Browne Report* makes no effort to conceal the government's approach to cost-cutting: "in our proposals, public spending reductions are made by removing the blanket subsidy [...] for all courses" (Browne 27). Public investment remains only "to support priority courses and the wider benefits they create" (Browne 25). As a result, higher education funding from the government provides support for STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), which are able to produce outcomes that Martha Nussbaum describes as "immediately useful discovery" (Not for Profit 129). The *Browne Report* does not once specifically refer to the humanities or the social sciences, which does little to restore confidence in any governmental interest in liberal education.

It is unsurprising then, that many humanities scholars do not feel that the Payments by Results system offers a suitable model of valuation for higher education. Colleen Lye et al. argue that such policy is indicative of universities being repositioned "as a business whose primary purpose is to drive economic growth, and

whose activities are expected to be profitable” (2).¹⁶ The language that describes universities as sites for “economic growth” “profit” and “business” enterprises lies outside of the vocabulary traditionally associated with the humanities. Lye et al. describe the current changes to higher education as resulting from “a consumerist view of education that resignifies it as a private investment instead of a public good” (2). Collini wryly notes how the “responsibility for higher education has now been subsumed into Lord Mandelson’s Department for Business” (“Impact on Humanities” 19). Such conceptions of higher education indicate that the government is interested in the economically valuable and external benefits to industry that are made available through advanced training. The *Browne Report* documents a marked shift in government involvement in higher education. The focus on global competition and internal comparison mechanisms reveals a state that no longer takes responsibility for the funding of universities.

This approach has led to the vast expansion of data collection and statistics, which attempted to categorise, evaluate, and substantiate the value of specific universities. In “Operationalizing Hope: The Neoliberalization of British Universities in Historico-Philosophical Perspective” (2013), Gagnier observes that “traditional markers of academic distinction [...] have been overtaken by internally established criteria of worth [in] compliance or alignment with the University’s competitive drive in a global Higher Education market” (11). Higher education is transformed into a commodity in an international marketplace, with universities becoming the providers of varying standards of education and setting their prices accordingly. Value cannot be attributed as absolute but instead as relational within the free market of education. As Samuel Bailey crucially established as early as 1825 in *A Critical*

¹⁶ For further example see Amsler S. (2011); Barnett R. (2011).

Dissertation on The Nature, Measure and Causes of Value, “value denotes consequently nothing positive or intrinsic, but merely the relation in which two objects stand to each other as exchangeable commodities” (4-5). Higher education has become a contemporary example of the age-old principle that quantitative values are not intrinsic but instead externally constructed through comparison, and in the particular case of student tuition through comparative league tables.

Writing in *Times Higher Education*, 7 October 2010, Claire Callender poses a vital question that many humanities scholars are continuing to attempt to answer:

according to Browne, the government should only fund ‘courses that [...] provide skills and knowledge currently in shortage’ such as science, technology, medicine, nursing, healthcare and ‘strategically important’ languages. What does this say about how society values the arts, humanities and social sciences? (“The Browne Review: How Britain Reacted”)

The implicit valuation and support of “strategically important” (Browne 47) courses implies an indirect disregard for that which it omits. The *Browne Report* institutes an 80% cut in government grants to teaching.¹⁷ Callender’s question, “what does this say about how society values the arts, humanities and social sciences?” requires an answer since it reveals a lack of valuation for a large proportion of academic disciplines. STEM subjects are perceived to provide immediate discoveries and are able to produce economically beneficial knowledge. The government support of such quantified education is a manifestation of the system of Payment by Results in its extreme.

¹⁷ See Paton, G. (2010) “Lord Browne Review: University Teaching Budgets Slashed by 80%”.

I argue that in terms of government motivation, the present situation of higher education is much like that of the educational reforms of the 1860s. The removal of the HEFCE block grant for all undergraduate courses reflected policymaking “decisions about whether the courses are a priority for the public interest” (Browne 47). The present system of Payment by Results since 2010, is akin to *Lowe’s Code* in the sense that it seeks to reward those skills that are most sought after on a national scale. In elementary education in 1862, basic literacy and numeracy were in serious demand. In the context of contemporary higher education, the focus is on training a generation of specialists for certain jobs.¹⁸ The present method of government investment suggests that higher education is not financed as an end in itself, but a means of creating the necessary skilled workers to meet national labour demands. What is being paid for in governmental investment in higher education is a human product, be it a doctor, technician or engineer. Any alternative values of higher education are not valued in the policymaking practice of Payment by Results.

In the 1860s, *Lowe’s Code* implemented the Payment by Results system as a catchall for basic literacy and numeracy skills. The *Browne Report* adopted the system for the opposite reason; its interest was in paying for the most specialised expertise that was in short supply and great demand both at the level of the national economy and the individual prospective student. The knowledge that the respective systems of Payment by Results funded were skills that at the time were deemed to be essential, useful, and beneficial to the nation. It is no coincidence that in a policymaking context, which demands measurable and short-term results, these kinds of knowledges were also quantitatively assessable. In contrast to the 2010s,

¹⁸ For example, the training of medical professionals is subsidised by the government in order to relieve the strain on the NHS as England’s population lives longer; 2011 Census data show that one in six people in England and Wales (over 9 million in total) are over 65.

the minimal model of assessment under *Lowe's Code* was favourable due to the primitive nature of public intervention in education and the need for efficiency to reduce government spending. In 1862, a system of Payment by Results was adopted as a foundational attempt to lay the groundwork for a universal system of elementary education in a disordered system.

Cutting subsidies for *non-essential* subjects in the *Browne Report* is in many ways a re-invention of the Payment by Results policy of the 1860s. In both instances, the government chose to only pay for subjects that produce readily measurable results in national high demand. In both *Lowe's Code* and the *Browne Report*, the primary impetus behind government action is the same: to regulate the amount of money spent on education. In 1859, the Newcastle Commission was instructed: "to inquire into the state of public education in England and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and *cheap* elementary instruction to all classes of the people" (Newcastle 1 my italics). Similar aspirations for cheapness endure in the *Browne Report*: "the pressure on public spending has increased significantly" (3) and "public resources [are] now limited" (25). The model of Payment by Results has been repeatedly assumed to be the best strategy for education to deliver "value for its money" (HC Deb 13 February 1862 vol. 165 c230) in England. It takes the work of a humanities scholar to point out that this is not an accidental or natural event, but the result of a particular neoliberal policymaking practice. Through interrogating policymaking practices, as phenomena to be understood in and of themselves, this chapter has served as a reminder of "the ways in which developments in economic thought were contested in the past" (Gagnier *The Insatiability of Human Wants* 5), in order to advance a critical consideration of the present.

Looking from this historical example to higher education today, one might expect to notice a difference in the governmental expectation of quality. This is not the case. An assurance of minimum levels of quality, the logic inherent in Payment by Results, has resurfaced in the *Browne Report*. The report explicitly states how in the free market of higher education “the interests of students will be protected by minimum levels of quality enforced through regulation” (Browne 3). “Minimum levels” (3), the devout interest of the economising administrators of 1862, pervades present educational policymaking through government regulation of education under the Payment by Results model. Shifting from *Lowe’s Code*, to one hundred and fifty years in the future, one might expect that the policymaking systems integral to education had evolved significantly. The excuses permitted to *Lowe’s Code*, as a system in its primitive stages of development, cannot apply to this contemporary example. The reprise of minimal investment models and the Payment by Results system is the result of a different set of circumstances than those facing policymakers in the 1860s wherein a neoliberal faith in the market seeks to reduce the values of education to an economic scale.

The national incentive to encourage students to study subjects that are valuable to the economy has not only been criticised by scholars in the arts and humanities. Aaron Porter (then President of the National Union of Students 2010-11) argued that “the true agenda [of the *Browne Report*] is to strip away all public support for arts, humanities and social science provision in universities and to pass on the costs directly to students’ bank accounts” (qtd. in Richardson). Speaking in economic terms, Porter criticises the devaluation of the arts and humanities. Across higher education organisations, research networks, and in the popular press, the cuts integral to the *Browne Report* were perceived as a dismissal of the value of the

humanities at the level of government. As a result, much of the criticism of the report has attacked the purely economic focus and the subsequent marketisation of education and sought to re-assert the importance of a humanistic education. This criticism is addressed in the final section of this chapter, but I will first address a significant point that Porter makes in identifying how the cost is passed onto students. The following section explores how the student is configured as being a customer of education, able “to ‘pay more’ in order to ‘get more’” (Browne 4).

2.4 The Rise of Individualism and the Student as Consumer

Despite seeking to reduce the public spending at a national level, the *Browne Report* also places a great deal of emphasis on the individual benefits of higher education. As seen above, higher education “matters” because of the contribution it makes to “innovation and economic transformation” (Browne 14). However, the following paragraph offers an additional reason that higher education is important: “because it transforms the lives of individuals” (Browne 14). At a surface level, this appears to offer a more holistic approach to the valuation of education, a momentary acknowledgement of alternative values. This optimistic misconception is quickly proven false, as the report repositions the individual solely within the market. The subsequent sentence completes the picture: “on graduating, graduates are more likely to be employed, more likely to enjoy higher wages and better job satisfaction, and more likely to find it easier to move from one job to the next” (Browne 14). The individual student is immediately configured within an economic framework, as a worker seeking training in order to earn “higher wages” (14).

However, in placing financial liability “in the hands of the student” along with the freedom of making a consumer “choice” (Browne 3) the present iteration of Payment by Results is no longer solely connected with state finance, but extends its logic to the public as potential individual consumers of higher education. As a result, universities are required to compete for tuition fees in a competitive market, in order to maintain their humanities and social sciences courses. Failing to attract students equates to a failure to sustain courses that are no longer subsidised by the government. This particular instantiation of Payment by Results places the student (or legal guardian of the student) in the position of assessor and as the ultimate attributor of value. Therefore, instead of limited criteria, the potential number of assessors with varying values and educational needs is vast. Students base their choices of a university (and, therefore, investment) on data concerning a long list of variable factors including course content, teaching quality, price, environment, league-table position, historic reputation, transport links, employment figures, and student satisfaction surveys. There are also unquantifiable reasons, both conscious and unconscious, for choosing a course or a university. Value for a student can be a more personal and complex choice than the government subsidy for useful (practical and prioritised) courses acknowledges.

Many students seek out concise sources of data, such as league tables, in order to make their individual choice. Studies indicate that institutional reputation continues to influence student choice to the greatest extent.¹⁹ In order to attract the highest calibre of applicants, a university must demonstrate world-leading research (most commonly exemplified by the ranking in the REF and grant incomes) and attain respectable league table positions (for categories such as student satisfaction

¹⁹ Connor, H. et al. (1999); Dunnett, A. et al. (2012) 12; Diamond, A. et al. (2012).

or graduate job destinations).²⁰ Sir Steve Smith (President of Universities UK 2009-11 and Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter 2002-present) explicitly recognises that attracting the best students, in turn, leads to better statistics.²¹ Brighter students are assumed to do better at university and therefore numbers of AAB+ grade students are proportional to league table positions. In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, 31 July 2011, Smith describes how “those students become like gold dust for their [university’s] reputation. So you might have an incredibly strong series of incentives” (Smith “Universities Cut Fees for Top Students”). This admission complicates the simple buyer-provider relationship that the *Browne Report* sought to establish in putting “students at the heart of the system” (25). In this system, students who obtain AAB+ grades are equally commodified, being seen as products to be bargained for in exchange for the “value-added” to an institution in the form of future statistics.

There has been a proliferation of data surrounding higher education since 2010. Although higher education organisations have a wealth of statistical evidence regarding the impact of the changes that are occurring within the neoliberal university, there is an urgent need for humanities to interpret them. Franco Moretti argues that humanistic engagement with data can reveal new and significant phenomena through methodologies that close reading occludes. However, more important is the recognition of a need for humanities scholars to engage and critique data that accounts for value. In *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (2005), Moretti identifies that “the real point, here, is less the specific answer, than the total *heterogeneity of problem and solution*: to make sense of qualitative

²⁰ For example, see the National Student Survey (NSS) or the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey.

²¹ ‘Best’ in the sense that they are deemed to be the most economically valuable to the institution. Obtaining AAA grades at A-Level.

data, I had to abandon the quantitative universe, and turn to morphology: evoke form, in order to explain figures” (24). Although in policy data might be initially considered as “independent of interpretation” (Moretti 33), Moretti argues they can be challenged, and indeed challenging, since once generated they rely on non-computational and qualitative skills of interpretation in order to have meaning or use. Under the changes of the *Browne Report*, and the implementation of the student as a consumer, any payment to universities becomes subject to its relational value within the dataset. Purely “intrinsic” value is not a calculable feature of the higher education market. The consequences of the changes to education are only beginning to be fully realised. The kinds of humanistic data analysis that Moretti performs upon the literary canon in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* should be adopted and applied to the proliferation of information concerning the contemporary university. The following discussion explores such interpretation of student application numbers.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS henceforth) applicant data reveals a decline in applicants when the £9,000 tuition fees were implemented in 2012. *The Guardian* published an extensive analysis of this data online, 30 January 2012, reporting that “total applications to UK universities were down by 7.4% on last year” and “languages and art related subjects are feeling the biggest decreases; non-European languages are down 21.5% and creative arts and design are down by over 16%” (Datablog).

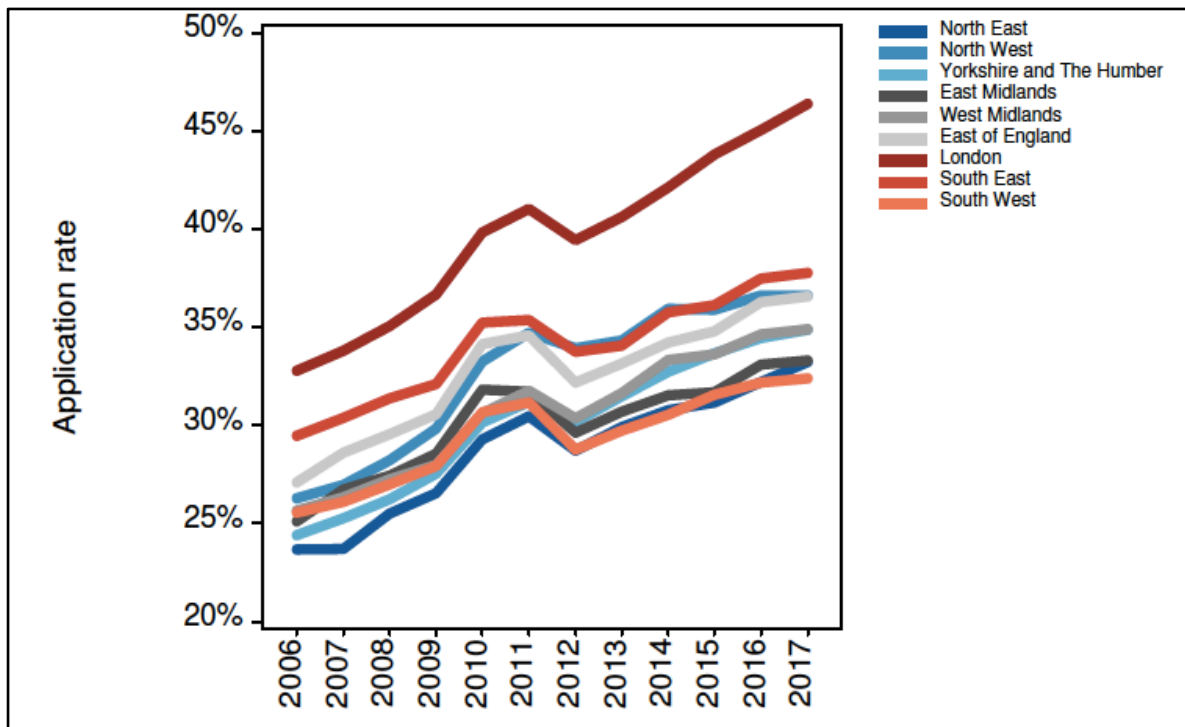


Figure 1: University Application Rates for English 18 year olds between 2006-17. This graph presented in “UCAS Application Results by the January Deadline 2017 cycle” UCAS Analysis and Research (2 February 2017) 12.

This decrease in applications was only a temporary effect of the changes to higher education funding and as figure one demonstrates, the drop in total applications was soon reversed (see figure one); in 2017 there were more students currently in higher education institutions in England than at any other point in history.

Whilst the 2013 data revealed an increase in the number of students electing to study disciplines in the category of the creative arts (although not at the same level as 2011) there was a continued drop in the percentage of students electing to study the arts and humanities generally. As figure two demonstrates, 2013 saw a further decrease of 6.1% in “European Langs, Lit” since 2012, and a 6.7% decrease in Non-European Langs, Lit” categories.²² This negative percentage score refers to a

²² The division of these subjects follows UCAS’ Joint Academic Coding System (JACS 3.0) first implemented in 2012. In this, “European Langs, Lit” consists of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Scandinavian, Russian & East European, European Studies and ‘Others’ in European

comparison between the present year and the number of applications the year before (in this case, 2012), which were already lower than the previous year. “Hist & Philosophical studies” was the only humanities category with increased student application numbers in 2013 at +2.3%.²³ To date, *The Guardian* has not provided such detailed data analysis for 2014; therefore, I have constructed a graph based on the same UCAS data set for 2014 (see figure three).

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languages, literature & related subjects. “Non-European Langs, Lit” includes Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, ‘Other’ Asian studies, African, Modern Middle Eastern, American, Australasian studies and ‘Others’ in Eastern, Asiatic, African, American & Australasian languages, literature & related subjects.

²³ UCAS JACS 3.0 defines “His & Philosophical studies as including broadly-based programmes within historical & philosophical studies; History by period; History by area; History by topic; Archaeology; Philosophy; Theology & religious studies; Heritage studies and ‘Others’ in historical & philosophical studies.

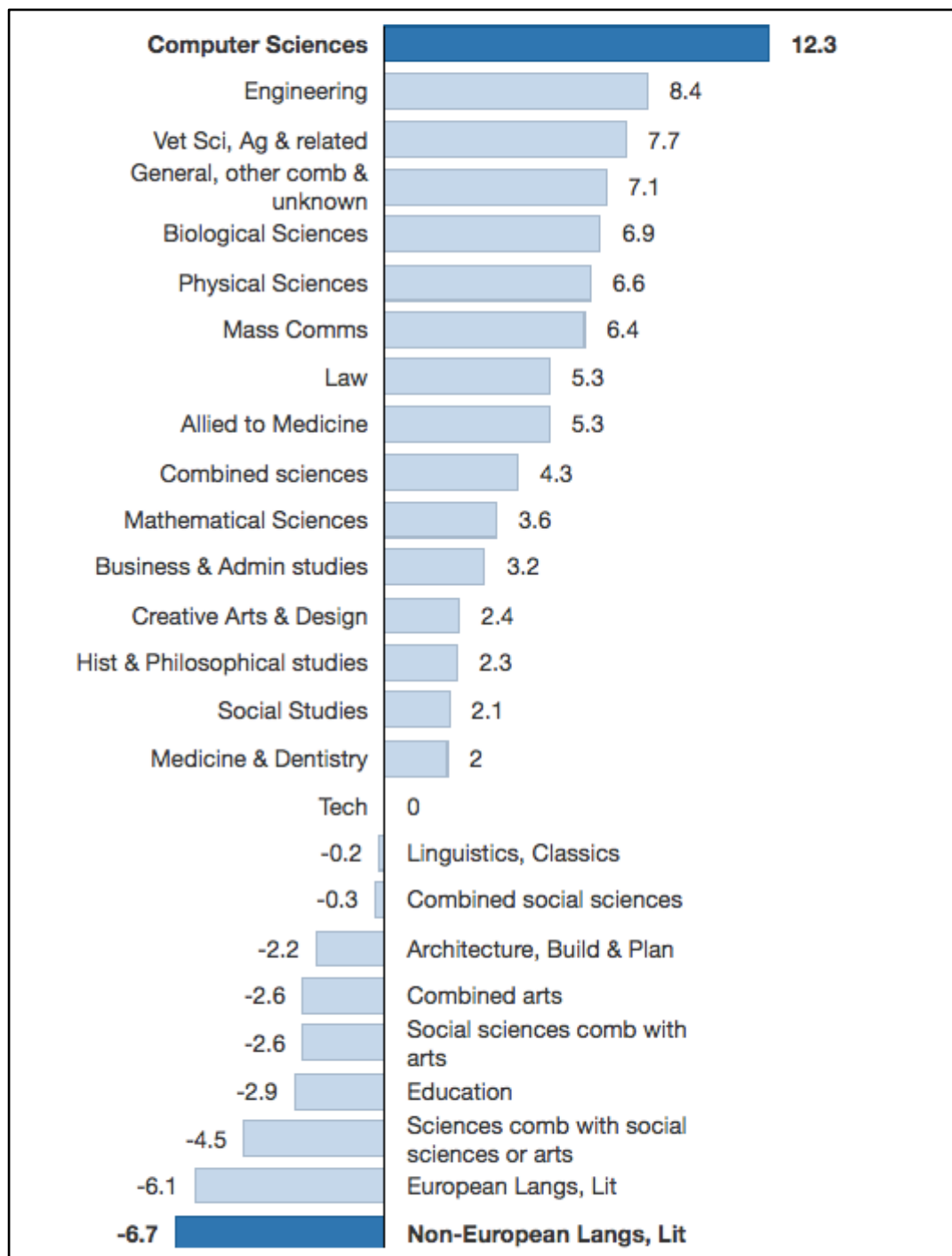


Figure 2: Percentage change in total applications by subject group (UCAS applicant data 30 January 2013). Graph Source: *Guardian Datablog* (30 January 2013) "University applications: where did people apply and for which subjects?".

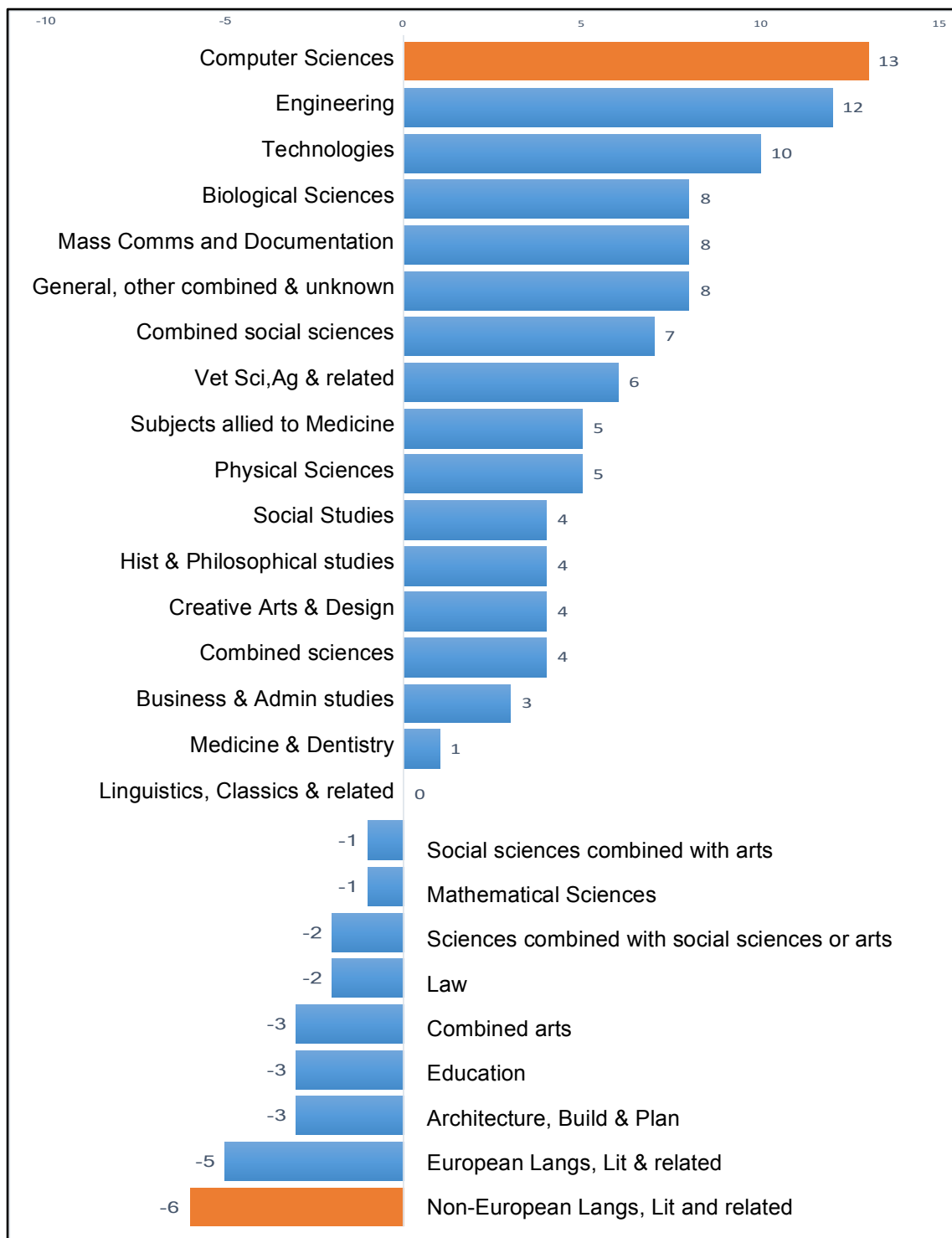


Figure 3: Analysis of application rates at January deadline 2014. Graph authors own. Data source: UCAS (2014) "UK application rates by country, region, sex, age and background: (2014 cycle, January deadline)".

Figure three shows the percentage difference between the numbers of applications in the 2014 UCAS cycle in contrast to 2013.²⁴ It demonstrates that language-based humanities have experienced the most significant drop in student applications. It is perhaps unsurprising to note that engineering and computer sciences saw an annual increase in student numbers since 2012. The *Browne Report* explicitly identifies engineering as being “important to the wellbeing of our society and to our economy” (Browne 25) and both subjects continued to “attract investment from the HE Council” (Browne 47) to support undergraduate tuition. Figure three paints a negative picture for the humanities between 2012-14.

However, not all statistics demonstrate a state of crisis for our disciplines. Although *The Guardian* headline, 31 January 2014, reads “Why the Drop in University Applications for Languages is Worrying” (Vincent) and *The Telegraph*, 14 Feb 2015, reports a “Dramatic Decline in Number of University Students Taking Modern Foreign Languages” (Turner), the state of the disciplines were less clear-cut when assessed on a wider scale. I generated the following graph (see figure four) from the actual number of applications as opposed to the percentage increase or decrease year-on-year. The graph generated from the same raw data is quite different. Perhaps, as Moretti argues, “quantification poses the problem, then, form offers the solution” (33). In considering the data across the span of four years, student interest in the humanities is not as negative. Although in 2012, the first year after the tuition fees and grant removal was implemented, there is a noticeable reduction in applicants in the humanities, figure four reveals no further significant

²⁴ The data is published annually in January following the end of the main UCAS application cycle. Data cited in this chapter refers to applicants in England specifically, although data for all domiciles in the UK is available.

decline in subsequent years in “Linguistics, Classics and Related” or “Hist. & Philosophical Studies”.²⁵

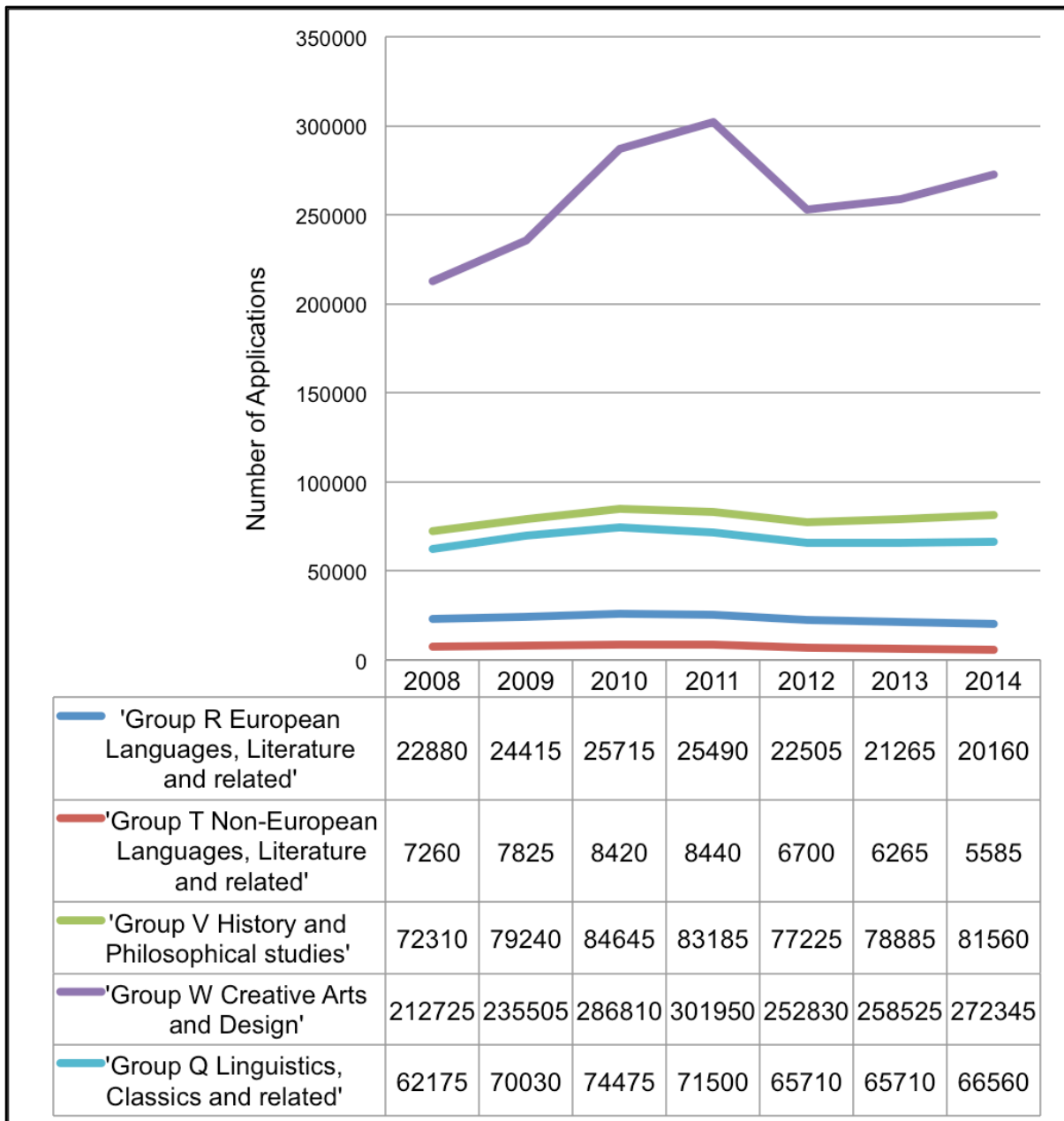


Figure 4: “UCAS Humanities Subject Applications 2008-14, Number of Applicants”. Graph Authors Own. Data Source: UCAS “January Deadline Analysis: Subjects” (30 January 2015).

²⁵ UCAS definitions of “Linguistics, Classics and Related includes: Broadly-based programmes within languages; Linguistics; Comparative literary studies; English studies; Ancient language studies; Celtic studies; Latin studies; Classical Greek studies; Classical studies; Others in linguistics, classics & related subjects.

Such data reflects that the attitude of “depressive disorientation” (Amsler 64) in the humanities may yet be surpassed, as a momentary tremor in this period of rapid transformation within higher education. The purpose of constructing these graphs is to demonstrate that although the *Browne Report* instituted a radical departure in the financing structure of higher education, the results are yet to be fully understood. Small argues an attentiveness to “the extent to which the value of a higher education, not only in the humanities, continues to be understood by students, teachers, parents, alumni [...] in ways that resist market valuation and economic quantification” (21). As humanities scholars, we should challenge the assumption that the transformation of the student into a consumer by policy is accompanied by a student’s willingness to be framed as one.

The *Browne Report* makes clear that a university education is an individual’s investment and not a public good. The report places “students at the heart of the system” (Browne 27) through personal and private investment, which changes higher education irrevocably: a complex consumer market of specialised *wants* replaces the assessment of minimum requirement of *needs*. Collini observes that the Browne report “in keeping with the ethos of market populism, shies away from anything that might look to involve a judgement that one activity is more worthwhile than another: all you can go by are consumer preferences, what people say they think they want” (“Browne’s Gamble” 24). Reducing the financing of education to consumer preference is problematic. Collini offers an analogy which, although is somewhat infantilising, illustrates the chief trouble with such an approach. He writes: “children may be best placed to judge what they want to get from the sweetshop, but they are not best placed to judge what they should get from their schooling” (23). To assume that students are in the best place to decide what sort of higher education they

“should get” (23) is not in keeping with policymaking in other areas of education. Nor, more importantly, why a country should be interested in educating their population.

The private student-led sector is very different from the allocation of government grants. Unlike the government administrator, the student-consumer does not seek a sufficient level for all education but instead aspires towards marketable excellence or personal preferences. Like any consumer marketplace, entry into higher education has become increasingly competitive and prospective students are not happy to invest their money in what might appear to be a second-rate product. With “the student at the heart of the system” (Browne 25) education is no longer assessed solely by a minimum standard. An education is not necessarily *desirable* to a student for the same reasons that it might be *useful* to a government administrator. The incompatibility of these models of value forces wider changes: *desire* dominates a consumer market, whereas *economic use* dictates policymaking. Higher education is increasingly funded by the student who has a more complex and often individuated set of criteria for assessing the value of higher education than the simple version of minimum expectations inherent in *Lowe’s Code*.

In a talk presented at Birkbeck College, London just a month after the publication of the *Browne Report*, Iain Pears noted that “in a completely free market, the humanities would clean up”. He argues that “faced with a choice between an arts degree costing £8,000 a year, and one in science costing upwards of £30,000 a year, history and philosophy would suddenly become very popular for all except those determined to become scientists” (Pears). The blanket cost of courses in the UK conceals the internal financing of courses. John Crace similarly observes that universities are “about £1,000-£1,500 better off on every arts and social studies student” since the cost of teaching subjects such as English is cheaper than

scientific subjects. The direct student tuition fees of £9,000 are actually a higher source of income than previous government block grants for these disciplines. Student tuition from the humanities, however, does not get spent in the humanities department; cross-subsidy occurs within institutions whereby popular humanities courses subsidise expensive STEM courses. This is an area of higher education management that is poorly communicated to the public and generally opaque to prospective students. Chris Newfield argues that “opening the books on cross-subsidies would allow the public to understand exactly why universities cost as much as they do. It would allow universities to honor the financial as well as the intellectual contributions of their cultural and social disciplines” (42). Although speaking in an American context, Newfield’s observations are equally applicable to the practices of funding courses in England.

Although Lowe sought to introduce an exclusively economic model of valuation into education in the 1860s, it was a temporary affair. His liberal economism would be tempered by the values inherent in a liberal education instituted in the Cross Commission, and a recognition the highest quality of education could not be built on narrowness and cheapness. To conclude this chapter on a note of optimism, perhaps in the free market of education, which emphasises the individual benefits of higher education, the potential of Arnold’s “*general intellectual cultivation*” (“Twice-Revised Code” 224) can yet be realised anew. The dangers of selfish liberalism, driven by competition, are as present now as they were in the nineteenth century. However, reading the intervention that Arnold made in his context, through “The Twice-Revised Code” stands as a reminder of the requirement for someone to assert the value of liberal education and offer a practical yet humanistic critique of policymaking approaches. The protests of Arnold and Shuttleworth remain the most

unfettered and least defensive critiques of economisation in education to the present day. It is time that the humanities revive a stronger sense of assurance in the values that they seek to uphold. Openness, tolerance, critical thinking, communication, and cultural awareness might be hard to plot on a graph or capture in a survey of Gross National Product, but they are values that, if shared and developed, can challenge educational values under neoliberalism.

Conclusion

This chapter began by returning to the roots of economic thinking in educational policymaking. The initial section traced the linguistic and legislative transformation of the Newcastle Commission into *Lowe's Code*. The actions of Parliamentary reform during the 1860s might be understood as a logical course of action aiming to provide a democratic framework for sustainable elementary education in England. However, closer critical analysis reveals that a short-term desire for a cheap system of governance was prioritised over the development of a suitable valuation model for schooling. I argue that the model of Payment by Results is a mechanism with which to institute a system of minimal assurances rather than maximal value. In tracing the history of Payment by Results, and providing a solid survey of the methods of government, this chapter contributes to a clearer understanding of how and why educational policy was economised between 1858-88. Doing so provides a rich historical narrative with which to address the present changes in higher education under the *Browne Report*.

The second part of this chapter built upon these nineteenth-century debates to explore how the system of Payment by Results is manifested under neoliberal conditions. To date, interpretation of policy documents is an underdeveloped part of humanities research into the value of the humanities. It is easier to avoid engaging with policy, lamenting its effects as opposed to engaging in a progressive critique. However, the work in this chapter provides a methodological approach to engaging with white papers and Parliamentary speeches that relies on humanistic skills of close reading and critique within a historically nuanced framework. Such a critical approach was commonplace in the nineteenth century, as Arnold's "Twice-Revised

Code” exemplifies. The second part of this chapter demonstrated how a policy preference for economic valuation shaped the development of the *Browne Report* and how neoliberal notions of privatisation, deregulation, and competition are now the politics of the higher education sector. I outlined how within this context a new relationship between the state, the university, and the student is established.

Universities are no longer beholden to the government but to a market of consumer choice. Interpretation of application data demonstrates that, although the humanities have suffered as an immediate consequence of the increase in tuition fees, the emerging situation may still hold promise. The critical interrogation into the cost of courses, cross-subsidies, and the desires of student-consumers is not a common focus for humanities scholarship but, I argue, is a necessary one. This chapter highlights the question of whether a proliferation of student choice in a free market might benefit the humanities, with an increased sense of individualism being seized to renew an interest in a liberal education that benefits both individuals and their wider society.

In a competitive market, universities attract students by offering maximum opportunities, wide-ranging choice and quality degree programmes. The humanities should be able to articulate the value of their disciplines in terms that can appeal to student desires. The liberal arts, which increasingly encompasses the arts, humanities, and social sciences, offers students an educational experience which is predicated on openness and human understanding. National league tables might be omnipresent, but most do not offer the ability to rank specific disciplines above one another, instead, only comparing like with like.²⁶

²⁶ For subject-league table see *The Guardian's* annual subject league tables. The exception to cross-departmental data is the National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSS), however, this data is not (yet) used to compare departments in university marketing.

Reading the *Browne Report* can leave a humanities scholar feeling anxious due to its whole-hearted disregard for the qualitative traits and non-economic values intrinsic to their disciplines. The complete lack of mention of the arts, humanities or social sciences by name throughout the *Browne Report* is deeply disconcerting. In practice, the government has chosen to support STEM subjects, leaving the teaching of the humanities, arts and social sciences unsupported by public subsidies at an undergraduate level. Despite the cuts to the undergraduate teaching grants, public funding remains for research in humanities disciplines.²⁷ The financial structures of universities change the relationships of disciplines within them, which have a range of positive and negative effects. For example within research, humanities scholars have formed collaborations with colleagues in the social sciences and sciences that may not have come to pass if public grants for research were not so science-oriented.²⁸ This chapter has demonstrated that the reformed higher education sector yields new possibilities alongside new challenges. Universities are no longer exclusively beholden to government interests and instead must rely on a firmer connection to students, non-academic institutions, the media, and the wider public. These alternative sites of value are explored throughout this thesis. Chapter two explores the relationship between STEM and the humanities, in which I analyse the debates between scholars across disciplines concerning value using their own terms, rather than being defined by the limited language of policy. Chapter three studies the connection between real-life and mediated representations in literary fiction, and chapter four develops a prolonged interaction between higher education and museums.

²⁷ The Research Councils UK continue to provide grants through the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

²⁸ Medical humanities, digital humanities and neurolinguistics are valuable cross-disciplinary fields of research that are developing as a result of a changing grant system.

CHAPTER TWO

Controversy and Conversation: The Relationship Between the Humanities and the Sciences

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between the humanities and the sciences, which is a connection that has become particularly significant in the context of contemporary valuation of higher education. The British Academy report “Past, Present, and Future: The Public Value of the Humanities and Social Sciences”, June 2010, identified the “tendency to see STEM subjects as *the* key to the success of universities and to national economic recovery” (3 my italics). The present division between Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects (STEM) and the arts, humanities and social sciences (HASS henceforth) is made explicit in government policy. It is concerning to observe the ways in which government policy is shaping the cultures of valuation and ultimately encouraging a shift in the significance of specific disciplines within higher education.

The debate over value between the sciences and the humanities has, in different guises, been taking place since the beginning of scholarly debate. In retracing the conversations between the disciplines, this chapter underlines how “[humanities] scholars and scientists share more, and have a greater interest in common where the role of universities is concerned, than the hackneyed contrast tends to suggest” (Collini *What Are Universities For?* 101). There are many more

than two perspectives and approaches to knowing, despite the stereotypical binary of humanities versus sciences. However, within a complex field of disciplinary practices, concentrating on this binary opposition allows for *something* to be articulated. The present preference for science over the humanities is not timeless. As the two cultures debate illustrates, some sixty-five years ago, science was in a defensive position. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to document how value has previously been articulated when the humanities and the sciences came into public confrontation. This chapter moves from the present backward through historical debates: part one explores the present policy-defined distinctions between the disciplines; part two interrogates the two cultures debate between Charles P. Snow and Frank R. Leavis in the 1960s; part three revives the correspondences between Matthew Arnold and Thomas H. Huxley. Taking a longer view of the connection between STEM and HASS can open up a series of conversations with more productive and open-ended results. Recontextualising the present value crisis scholars face, at the level of national governance and funding, this chapter explores how the humanities and the sciences have previously negotiated tensions between their disciplines. This attentiveness to past debates draws attention to discursive tools as well as a reassurance that the current myopic perspective of policymaking is not destined for permanence. A narrative history reveals that such declarations of disciplinary difference were announced *between* the arts and the sciences, not *about* them. Therefore, this chapter offers an articulation of the value of the humanities that is not presented as a justification to policy but as an example of the active processes of understanding that are inherent in the disciplines themselves.

1.0 Policy and the Relationship Between the Disciplines

1.1 Present Policy Preferences

The discussion in chapter one demonstrated the prioritisation of economic skills within the *Browne Report* in the funding bias towards STEM subjects, in terms of grants for undergraduate tuition. The removal of block grants, as a consequence of the policymaking decision to “withdraw public investment through HEFCE from many courses to contribute to wider reductions in public spending” (Browne 25), has impacted the arts and humanities to a greater extent than the sciences. Writing in *The Telegraph*, 20 February 2011, Simon Schama observes how “sciences and subjects which seem to be on a utilitarian measure useful have retained their state funding while the arts and humanities are being stripped of theirs” (“Cuts Will Make History Preserve of the Rich”). STEM subjects are seen to be able to produce economically beneficial discoveries. The *Browne Report* recognises that “the costs of these courses are high and, if students were asked to meet all of the costs, there is a risk that they would choose to study cheaper courses instead” (25). Despite the privatisation of tuition fees and the adoption of a free market of education, there is nonetheless “public investment to support priority courses and the wider benefits they create” (25). Therefore, this is not a free market of education, but rather a marketplace with specific incentives and sponsorship from the state. Such delineation between disciplines has caused concern amongst humanities scholars, who argue that their work has been sidelined as less valuable than the work of their colleagues in the sciences.

In terms of research funding, a preference towards metric evaluation has led to further concern. In 2008, Martha Nussbaum observed how “the current Labour

government [had] recast all research, including humanities research, on the model of research in the sciences” (*Not for Profit* 128). The remodelling of research assessment frameworks in 2008 saw the application of categories used to assess science and innovation also used to justify value in the humanities. The Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework, known as the Stern Review, published its assessment of the 2014 REF in July 2016. The report “Building on Success and Learning from Experience” summarises how the reforms between 2008-14 aspired towards a “metrics-based, target-driven exercise” (Stern 42) that would “better demonstrate and incentivise the economic and societal contribution, and justify continued investment in, public funding for Science & Research” (42). Introduction of impact metrics into the 2014 Research Excellence Framework further altered the valuation of research, the implications of which are directly addressed in chapter four. To briefly encapsulate the relevance of these changes to the present discussion: policymakers were dubious that “the peer review based system was as effective and efficient as it could be” (Stern 42). Changes to research assessment have introduced a new policy landscape which, most commonly, recognises value when presented in metric form. Many researchers within the humanities argued that a quantitative approach to research assessment favours STEM subjects which are more naturally inclined to produce data and evidence-based results.

The valuation of tangible results is evidenced across the higher education sector, from marketing campaigns, to funding allocations, to module design.¹ For example, a promotional video “A Year in the Life of the University of Exeter” published on YouTube, 12 December 2013, celebrates that year’s research across the university. It exhibits a heavy bias towards the sciences: of the eight examples

¹ See John Guillory (1993) *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* for a critique of the “technobureaucratic conditions” (264) of curriculum design.

demonstrated in the video seven are the consequence of STEM research. The contribution from the humanities, an Archaeology project, reads: “Buoyant Bronze Age Boat Makes History in Cornwall” (see figure one).

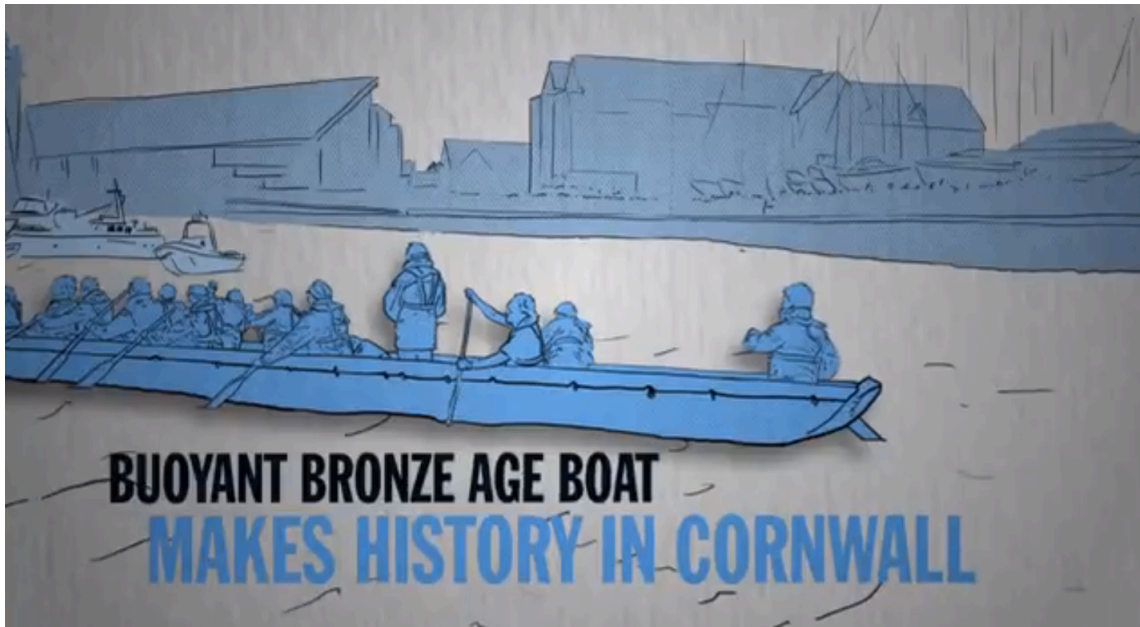


Figure 1: “A year in the life of the University of Exeter.” University of Exeter, 12 December 2013.

This singular humanities example is the exception that proves the rule.

Archaeologists worked alongside the National Maritime Museum to reconstruct a working bronze-age boat using original materials and techniques. The projects celebrated in the video all provide clear tangible results and each idea is communicated with fewer than ten words. The subtitles provide further insight into the domination of results: “scientists prove”, “scientists get”, and scientific “study uncovers”. The video pronounces the creation of “350 jobs” and celebrates breaking into the “Top 150 World Ranking” for universities worldwide. Numerical results, economic profits, and tangibility of research outcomes become indicators of a successful year in higher education. This poses a problem for the humanities since

not many scholars are able (or, significantly, willing) to balance research and teaching with shipbuilding. Although this example is hyperbolic, the demand for tangible and marketable values leads to the funding of projects that can be readily defined in quantitative terms.

The above discussion is not a debate about the value of the humanities and the sciences, instead, it is an indication of how the marketing of higher education and the white papers of Parliament value the kinds of research that science produces, as well as the graduates that it creates. In *From Two Cultures to No Culture: C.P. Snow's 'Two Cultures' Lecture Fifty Years On* (2009) Furedi et al. describe how in the contemporary period “questions about the role of the sciences and of the humanities in education seldom acquire the form of a debate about substance. Increasingly, concerns about the intellectual content of education have given way to narrow technical ones about the organisation of the curriculum” (64). In terms of both scope and scale — the defence of an entire mode of thinking — returning to genuine conflict in the two cultures debate provides a point of contrast to higher education today. Furedi et al. highlight how “in 1959 Snow worried about divisions between the two cultures; we now have to ask ourselves whether our culture can survive, in any meaningful sense, at all” (25). The melodrama of such a claim clearly fits in with the allure of crisis narratives, discussed in the introductory chapter. However, the monoculture of market value is a serious concern for both scientists and humanities scholars alike. Furedi et al. are correct in identifying that today it is not the scientist and the literature professor who are in direct contest, but the policymaker and the scholar. This is a novel pairing since historically the dispute concerning value developed between the disciplines. Before turning to specific examples of debate, the following section briefly outlines the nature of this repetitive debate.

1.2 A Brief History of an Age-Old Argument

Empirical and humanistic forms of knowing provide near-constant counterpoints as ways in which to perceive the world. Patricia Waugh details the repetitious nature of opposition within academic cultures as follows:

in antiquity, an emergent rationalism vied with a literary culture concerned with the training of the orator-lawyer; in the Renaissance, an emergent humanism with an entrenched Scholasticism, the foundation of a theological training and world-view; since the 19th century, the cultures of the humanities have found themselves repeatedly clashing with the positivist or rationalistic foundations of the research model of scientific training. (*Reviews in History* 308)

All of the above exchanges are disputes or conversations amongst scholars themselves. Helen Small's *The Value of the Humanities* makes a similar reference to the repetitive nature of debates such as these. She identifies how "Sokal was a repetition of Snow/Leavis; Snow/Leavis of Huxley/Arnold; but the deeper historical roots go back into classical antiquity" (37).² Repetition does not make the debate any less significant, in fact, Small argues that returning to moments of conflict can provide a lens through which to more clearly distinguish disciplinary forms. The re-interpretation of scholarly history is an important part of the work that humanities scholars do. With this in mind, this chapter follows a similar genealogy to Small in tracing the relationships of Snow and Leavis before returning to Huxley and Arnold.

² The Sokal affair was a publishing hoax in which Alan Sokal, Professor of Physics at New York University (NYU), published an article "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" (1996) in leading cultural journal *Social Text*, before announcing his article was written as a deliberate attempt to unmask the dangers of postmodernism. For discussion see Editors of *Lingua Franca*, *The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook The Academy* (2000).

Small observes how in debates concerning the sciences and the humanities all repetitions are different,

but they share two positive features: a recognition of the rhetorical power of binary oppositions; and a provisional commitment to their utility as diagrammatic accounts of the educational field as it encounters the political field. They crudify matters, but they also clarify them, and when faced with complexity we may be persuaded to put up with quite a lot of crudeness in the service of getting a basic outline from which refinements can start. (37)

Operating through hyperbole, these debates are able to capture a crude caricature of the values that are at stake in the work of the humanities. In “C. P. Snow’s Fiction of Two Cultures” (1983) Peter Stringer argues that “simplifying and ordering properties help to make sense in particular of complex, large-scale and troubling phenomena” (172). The problem facing the humanities and the sciences today is surely complex and troubling. Small’s idea of crudeness in repetition provides the benefit of “getting a basic outline” (37) of the relationship between the humanities and the sciences, which appears to be so instrumental in shaping the landscape of value in higher education. Upon this foundation, more advanced speculations can be built.

2.0 The “Two Cultures Controversy”, Then and Now

The infamous debate between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis during the 1960s forms this chapter’s first example of such an oppositional relationship between the sciences and the humanities. An extensive body of scholarship describes the implications of the two cultures debate and chronicles the contemporaneous critical commentary with equal precision.³ As a result, I will not retread old ground in the hope revealing a new revelation concerning the content of the exchange between Snow and Leavis. However, returning to this moment of contact between the sciences and the humanities presents an articulation of the humanities in a moment of confident self-valuation, which is in stark contrast to the defensive language commonly deployed in the present moment. This section specifically considers how articulations of value can be established through rhetorical confrontation; the investigation is not a case of *who said what when* but rather, *who said what how*. Returning to the exchange between Snow and Leavis provides an opportunity to explore the productive capacities of voicing disciplinary conflict.

The discussion is structured as follows. First, I introduce the specific lectures in which the controversy emerged, exploring the motivations behind and rhetorical structure of both Snow and Leavis’ public statements. Second, I outline the continued interest in the two cultures as a defining moment between the humanities and the sciences. Drawing upon the recently re-edited editions of Snow’s *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (2012) and Leavis’ *The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow* (2013) both introduced by Stefan Collini, I discuss how

³ See Trilling, L. (1962) “Science, Literature and Culture: A Comment on the Leavis-Snow Controversy”; Kimball, R. (February 1994) “The Two Cultures’ today”; Ortolano, G. (2009) *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain*; Furedi et al. (2009) *From Two Cultures to No Culture C.P. Snow’s ‘Two Cultures’ Lecture Fifty Years On*; Collini, S. (2013) “Leavis v Snow: The Two-Cultures Bust-Up 50 Years On”.

the lectures represent value through their formal properties. Finally, in drawing upon critical theory concerning opposition and rupture, I argue that the activity of speaking up for values in the form of a public lecture produces a significant social event. The vitality of speech-acts and the opportunities that a public lecture affords is an area of scholarship concerning the “two cultures” that has been underdeveloped. Although Snow and Leavis are dismissive of many aspects of each other’s culture, and remain in the realm of oppositional and stereotypical criticisms, reading these avid defences of discipline leaves an audience with little doubt that there are cultures to be preserved.

2.1 The Birth of a Controversy

The Snow-Leavis controversy is perhaps the most regurgitated public debate in the history of modern intellectual life. Such notoriety is, in part, due to the aggressive defences of science and literature that the exchange produced. On 7 May 1959, British scientist and novelist C. P. Snow delivered a lecture that was to make the term “two cultures” famous.⁴ The occasion was the annual Rede Lecture held at Cambridge University and the speech was published as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* later that same year. Snow describes a “gulf of mutual incomprehension” and “lack of understanding” (5) between the humanities and the sciences. Throughout the lecture, Snow adopts the term “two cultures” to describe the particular incomprehension between “literary intellectuals” and “physical scientists” (4). Despite the narrow focus of Snow’s contention, subsequent critical debates, and coverage in the media over the past fifty years has used the two

⁴ Snow first used the phrase in an article in the *New Statesman*, 2 October 1956.

cultures to represent a broader distinction that is made between the study of subjects within the humanities and the sciences as opposed to literature alone.⁵ Within this more general division of disciplines, the arts and social sciences are often included in the category of humanistic culture (such as SSH or HASS) with scientific culture being comprised of natural sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).⁶ In his introduction to *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, Collini observes how Snow “talk[s] about characteristics of research scientists and of writers as groups, and makes no practical proposals for shrinking the gap he identifies between them” (xxvi). The purpose of the lecture was to distinguish one culture above another: literary scholars were to be seen as “self-impooverished” (Snow 14) by their ignorance and traditional value, while scientists “have the future in their bones” (12). Collini notes how the debate that Snow initiated was not “concerned with the structure and content of educational arrangements” (*The Two Cultures* xxvi) but rather with the ideological positioning of disciplines within society at large. For Snow, national progress required “breaking the pattern into which they had crystallised” (40) and recognising the value of applied sciences above that of literary culture.

The “two cultures” became the “two cultures controversy” when that “*auteur* of *hauteur*” (T. Miller 45), F. R. Leavis, assumed the task of response. Three years after the Rede Lecture, Snow’s assertions about the value of science became one side of an emerging dispute. Leavis used the occasion of the annual lecture at Downing College, Cambridge, 28 February 1962, to deliver his rejoinder to Snow. Although Leavis’ lecture addressed the disciplinary differences between literature and science,

⁵ The significance of literature (and by association the subject of English) as a representative subject for the humanities is addressed further in chapter three, see section 2.2.

⁶ Kagan, J. (2009) among others, has argued that the social sciences constitute an entirely distinct third culture.

it was also a direct and personal attack on Snow's authority to speak on the topic. Charlotte Sleigh describes how Leavis "loudly and publicly scoffed at the value of science, and denounced the quality of Snow's novels for good measure" (3). Some of the most acerbic of remarks that Leavis levies against Snow include: "he doesn't know what he means, and he doesn't know he doesn't know" (55); "the intellectual nullity" of "Snow's panoptic pseudocogencies, his parade of a thesis: the mind to be argued with — that is not there" (56); "Snow is, of course, a- no, I can't say that; he isn't; Snow thinks of himself as a novelist" (57). Leavis was unrelentingly sarcastic and authoritative in his dismissal. His lecture argued that Snow grossly misunderstood literary culture and identified how, as a result of the speakers' ignorance, the vision outlined in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* was largely erroneous.

Although Leavis' criticisms were directed at Snow as an individual, it was not the result of any long-standing personal feud. In his lecture, Leavis notes how, at the time of the initial publication of Snow's treatise in 1959, he had "perceived plainly enough what kind of performance the lecture was, and had no inclination to lay down three and sixpence" (55) to purchase the publication in order to give it further scrutiny. His belated response three years later was partly fuelled by an irritation that Snow's novels were being used in examination papers to read English at Cambridge. In his lecture, Leavis complains that "sixth-form masters were making their bright boys read Snow as doctrinal, definitive and formative" (56). Leavis remarks with surprise at how "it rapidly took on the standing of a classic" (55) and it was likely the lasting influence of Snow's argument that was the greatest insult to Leavis. The wide circulation and lasting power of Snow's speech, rather than the immediate content, is what caused Leavis to react so strongly.

Leavis lived and worked in Cambridge for his entire life. The tone of the lecture at a time when one might expect a gracious retirement is a central component of the shock-factor of the confrontation.⁷ Initial reactions to the lecture flooded the letters page of *Spectator*. Many were highly critical of the acerbic tone and personal nature of Leavis' speech, writing to the *Spectator*, 16 March 1962, Stephen Toulmin argued that it "amounts to an abuse of language" (12); Lord Boothby called it "reptilian venom" (11); and Susan Hill resented the "cheap jibes and highly personal statements" (11-12). Beyond surprise at the anger of the lecture, critics also identified that in his destructive critique, Leavis had offered little articulation of the value of the humanities. Hill commented that "having knocked down C. P. Snow, he presents us with no alternative to Snow — presumably, as he does not, he has none" (*The Spectator* 11); Boothby similarly, argued that "there is not a single constructive thought in his lecture; and the Cambridge audience who tittered at his malicious asides, and applauded at the end because they thought it was the right thing to do, should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves" (11). The many affronted respondents to Leavis' lecture reveal the high-stakes in the debate. While Snow's Rede Lecture had been received well at first and had been relatively undisputed, Leavis' lecture opened up a controversy in its first utterance.⁸

Leavis published a transcript of *The Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow* in *Spectator* on 9 March 1962 enabling further circulation and speculation upon the debate. In subsequent reprints of his lecture Leavis stood by his comments about Snow. Much critical attention has been paid, both in contemporaneous and

⁷ Leavis' retirement plans were well-known prior to his Downing lecture.

⁸ For evidence of the relative neutrality and broad assent towards Snow's Rede Lecture see *Encounter* (August 1959) "C. P. Snow and 'The Two Cultures'" responses from Walter Allen, A.C.B. Lovell, J. H. Plumb, David Riesman, Bertrand Russell, Sir John Cockcroft, and Michael Ayrton 67-73; see also *Encounter* (September 1959) "The Two Cultures" 61-65.

present-day discussions of the Snow-Leavis affair (as it became known), as to how Leavis attacked Snow so personally within the content of his lecture. In the introduction to *The Two Cultures: The Significance of C. P. Snow* Collini offers an alternative interpretation to the assumptions presented above. He defends Leavis by arguing that “the Richmond lecture has been frequently misperceived as a personal attack on Snow” (11). Instead, Collini insists that the comments were merely designed to “correct the overestimation of Snow as a sage” (11). Leavis was increasingly resistant to the relationship between fame and academia, and avoided participating in literary celebrity life that was particularly located in London at the time. As Collini observes how Leavis “despaired of the superficiality and mutual back-scratching of contemporary literary culture” (6) and sought to foster a “university of a minority public capable of true critical discrimination” (6). Leavis, accordingly, describes Snow as a “portent” who is largely “created by the cultural conditions manifested in his acceptance” (54). Therefore, Collini posits that the central criticism of *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* is not directed at Snow, but at the society that has promoted him to such theocratic heights within the academy.

This consideration leads to a wider question: how can an individual critic speak up against a value system? Leavis’ answer was through a specific and embodied attack on the rhetorical speech of someone whom he perceived to be a figurehead. Attacking Snow’s professional abilities has been remembered infamously in the years following the debate. However, I argue that the form of the argument itself is of use for the contemporary value debates in higher education through paying close analysis to how large-scale systemic values are expressed in a discrete and embodied format, such as a public lecture. The following section explores how the

form of the argument of the two cultures controversy has continued to captivate, and questions why no intellectual disagreement has exceeded the scandal of Leavis and Snow in the past half-century.

2.2 The Form of the Debate

Watching from across the Atlantic, Lionel Trilling, writing for the *Higher Education Quarterly*, November 1962, observed how “so curious a storm rages in England” (9). Trilling’s account provides a concise survey of the two lectures and ensuing correspondences. Significantly, his article concludes with identifying several similarities between Snow and Leavis. He notes that “if ever two men were committed to England, Home and Duty, they are Leavis and Snow — he would say that in this they are as alike as two squares” (27-28). Both men promote what they believe to be the best way to value knowledge within higher education. Therefore, Snow and Leavis provide active performances of the tacit tensions in the academy at that time. Small reports that “observation on the most famous and fractious of two culture encounters” in fact “tells us very little about the kinds of work the participants’ university colleagues were doing at the time but a great deal about the wider social, cultural, institutional, and political factors that had a bearing on the argument” (*The Value of the Humanities* 35). These wide institutional and political concerns motivated Snow and Leavis’ public lectures to put forward their statements on the matter. It is these wider factors, rather than their individual personalities that maintain the relevance of the debate to our present context.

Frank James argues that “there is a tendency by non-historians to view issues and ideas, such as the Two Cultures, as timeless” (109). Instead, each

manifestation, although repetitive, should be understood as historically contingent. The phrase “two cultures” did not simply appear by coincidence in 1959 but instead provided a name for an already existent phenomenon at a critical moment. Guy Ortolano provides a meticulously researched account of the specific context of post-war Britain and its significance in the emergence of the two cultures debate in *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (2009). He argues that “the exchange between Snow and Leavis was one such dispute, one that was charged by — and is revealing of — the context and culture in which it took place” (7). While drawing upon an awareness of the socio-historical context that Ortolano’s study provides, I reject his conception of thinking of history as a series of “episode[s]” (9). Both scholarly writing and media coverage of “the two cultures controversy” predominantly focuses on recounting one or two episodes. I want to challenge the idea of the two cultures controversy as an episode in history and instead consider it as a rupture of ideological forces that were long operational beneath the surface. It is a refrain, or a repeating motif, that is expressed in a particular way for a particular reason. As Leavis was well aware, analysis of argumentative style holds disruptive potential. In *The Way We Argue Now* (2006) Amanda Anderson observes, “intellectual and aesthetic postures are always lived practices” (7). The two cultures controversy is a clear example of this, and in enlivening the values they represent, Snow and Leavis offer us distinct academic values to consider.

The speeches of Snow and Leavis as *speeches* are significant in developing an understanding of the ideological implications of a moment of rupture and the moment of response. Therefore, I will discuss the formal qualities of the events that history has chosen to remember (Ortolano’s “episodes”), in order to understand how two

academic lectures could have produced so long-lived a debate. I argue that the *form of the debate* generates value within a particular historical context. Collini observes how “a lecture is above all an occasion, in both senses of the word — it is a social event and it is an opportunity” (*The Two Cultures?* xxviii). He argues that, in comparison to other forms of argumentation, “the lecture strikes a more declarative or argumentative pose, and even though the best lectures exploit a collusive relation with their audience, the form is inherently pedagogic” (xxviii). A lecture represents an occasion in which language can produce expressions of opinions that endure. The opportunity to discuss disciplinary value was always present; it was simply the “occasion” that brought about the expression in the medium of a pedagogic and polemical lecture. Therefore, a lecture provides a formalised opportunity to express a perspective with the guarantee that the speaker will be heard. Understanding value in these terms is much like Judith Butler’s notion of performative agency.⁹ Butler argues that speech acts “bring about certain realities” (“Performative Agency” 147) especially when uttered from those wielding social status. Although, admittedly, “utterance alone does not bring about the day” she argues that it “can set into motion a set of actions that can, under certain felicitous circumstances, bring the day around” (148). Snow delivered his treatise in a public lecture in Cambridge in 1959 and Leavis presented his cutting response to an audience within the same institution three years later. The medium of controversy was born in the lecture hall and continued in newspaper columns and printed responses. These episodes were not specifically designed for the purpose that the speakers elected to use them for. Two eminent scholars took the opportunity to co-opt their lecture to represent the values

⁹ The term “performativity” develops J. L. Austin’s idea of “performative utterance”. See Austin, J. L., “How to Do Things With Words” lecture (1955/1962) 22.

they sought to uphold within the academy. Such coercion of a public event might yet be revived as a strategy for articulating the value of the humanities.

Beyond the basic properties of a lecture, further formal qualities of controversy are also worthy of attention. In bringing oppositional forces into contest, sides are established and polarities are drawn. It was when Leavis responded to Snow, that the two cultures became the two cultures *controversy*. It is important to distinguish between these two phrases. Richard Rorty notes how “rivalries such as these will doubtless always exist, simply because Hegel was right that only a dialectical *agon* will produce intellectual novelty” (28). Agonism, the belief that contestation can be a productive force in society, has been explored in the work of Nietzsche, Adorno, and Foucault. Nietzsche’s “Homer’s Contest” defines the purpose of Agonistic critique as,

a thought that is hostile to the ‘exclusivity’ of genius in the modern sense, but assumes that there are always several geniuses to incite each other to action, just as they keep each other within certain limits, too. That is the kernel of the Hellenic idea of competition: it loathes a monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as protective measure against genius – a second genius. (178)

With the arrival of the “second genius” (Nietzsche 178) a productive intellectual articulation is instigated. The agonistic approach of the controversy is important to maintain, to avoid a singular perspective, which seeks to dominate all value judgements. This speaks back to the productive cultures of liberalism highlighted in the introductory chapter, a significant contrast to the vacuum of value in public discourse today.

Above all else, the two cultures controversy represents an embodied performance of disciplinary values. Leavis' response demonstrates a confident grasp of rhetorical tools and an ability to persuade an audience. It is a brazen example of "an alternative of [the kind of] reductive instrumentalism" (Collini *The Two Cultures* 47) that Snow's vision of higher education represented. Collini argues that "infiltrating it [an alternative vision] into the critique of one's opponent's language, may be the only strategy for avoiding such vacuity" (*The Two Cultures?* 48). Instead of speaking in abstract terms about the value of literary criticism, Leavis uses the *form* of the lecture to enact that value.

2.3 The Two Cultures Today

In contemporary higher education, such an oppositional relationship and attentiveness to rhetorical critique is wanting. Although the Snow-Leavis controversy is often regarded as a negative part of the history of higher education, I argue that a variety of diverse cultures is better than one unregulated market. Humanities scholars can return to the two cultures controversy through the printed legacy that was left behind. Although when transcribed, lectures lose many of their formal charms and confidences, these speeches continue to be significant. In 1995, Michael Caines cited Snow's *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* as one of the most influential books since World War II.¹⁰ The past five years has seen increased media interest in reviving the debate between Snow and Leavis.¹¹ This resurgence of interest correlates to the passing of the fiftieth anniversary of the debate.

¹⁰ This list was published in *The Times Literary Supplement* (6 October 1995).

¹¹ See Whelan, R. in *The Telegraph* (5 May 2009); Collini, S. in *The Guardian* (16 August 2013); Bragg, M. on *BBC Radio 4* (2 January 2013).

However, if the commemoration of the two cultures is simply to narrate its sequence, there seems little point in digging up the dirt. It is, therefore, beneficial to observe the formal qualities of the controversy, the rhetorical tools, and the potential for agonism.

Leavis' response presents a critique of language; in the present moment humanities scholars should equally attack the "leaden, cliché-ridden, over-abstraction of so many official documents" and "the meaningless hype of advertising and marketing" (Collini, "Introduction" 48). In the context of neoliberal monoculture, the existence of a multiplicity of voices and values is something worth fighting for, not about. In the present state of populism, in which inaccurate perspectives are held and shared without concern for veracity, we require critical voices that challenge the status quo. In his chapter in *Gadamer's Repercussions*, Richard Rorty optimistically envisions a future in which disciplinary differences are no longer seen as a weakness but as a strength:

every area of culture would be expected to have its own parochial description of every other area of culture, but nobody will ask which of these descriptions gets that area right. The important thing is that it will be *herrschaftsfrei* [*free of domination*]; there will be no one, overarching filing system into which everybody is expected to fit. (28)

An academy that is *herrschaftsfrei* should be of interest to all scholars. Through conflicting discussion and through contest, comes intellectual cultivation.

3.0 A Liberal Valuation: Arnold and Huxley's Exchange

This section moves from a discussion about conflict into the realm of conversation. It is, nonetheless, not without some tension between scientific and cultural discourse. In *Professions: Conversations on the Future of Literary and Cultural Studies* (2001) Donald Hall describes how “conversations can take us places that we never imagined going. Unlike monologues multi-voiced discussions do not proceed according to any one individual's plan; they develop [...] in surprising ways through chance occurrence and spontaneous articulation” (1). Arnold and Huxley's exchange during the 1880s is a pronounced example of a “multi-voiced discussion” (1) between science and literature. In the face of significant differences between their disciplinary approaches, Arnold and Huxley engaged in a conversation rather than a controversy. Although in both letters and public lectures, each is persuasive, they do not seek to shut out the possibility to consider another angle of the debate. While Snow and Leavis had no prior amicable relationship, Arnold and Huxley engaged in a long correspondence and shared belief in the value of a liberal education and the importance of fostering a richer cultural life in England.¹²

A sense of productive communication between the two men, as opposed to retrenched and isolationist thinking, is captured in their correspondences. Walter Armytage's “Matthew Arnold and T. H. Huxley: Some New Letters 1870-80” (1953) provides valuable evidence of this mutual respect. For example, in a letter dated 17 October 1880, Arnold writes to Huxley: “God forbid that I should make such a bad return as to enter into *controversy* with you” (352 my italics). Attentiveness to the

¹² These similarities between Arnold and Huxley include a common distrust in the truth claims of organised religion and a shared devotion to educational reform in England. For example, Ortolano, G. (2009) draws attention to shared values between Snow and Leavis including meritocratic and broadly liberal views.

form of response and to the importance of speech-acts is not limited to Arnold's literary approach. Huxley was equally interested in expression and communication. His article "On Literary Style" concludes by citing Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon's dictum: "le style c'est l'homme" [the style is the man].¹³ The style of their conversation is considered and both Arnold and Huxley avoid being framed as omniscient.

3.1 The Start of a Conversation

On 14 June 1882 Arnold presented the annual Rede Lecture, "Science and Literature", at the very same occasion that Snow would introduce the concept of "the two cultures" some eighty years in the future. Whereas Snow's lecture initiated a debate, Arnold's lecture was a response. Arnold's speech was a formal answer to the renowned biologist, Huxley, who had presented his understanding of the relationship between "Science and Culture" two years prior, 1 October 1880, at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's Science College in Birmingham. Huxley used this inauguration to argue that "the diffusion of thorough scientific education is an absolutely essential condition of industrial progress" (Science and Culture 11). His lecture offers a history of the dominance of humanities disciplines and their traditional role as the guardians of culture. Huxley directly names his opposite, "Mr Arnold" (14) as the archetypal humanist scholar: "our chief apostle of culture" (14). Huxley introduces Arnold as an example of someone who has "true sympathy with scientific thought", and describes himself as "the last person to question the

¹³ Incidentally, Buffon was also a scientist interested in discursive style. He presented his "Discourse on Style" on being elected to the French Academy, 25 August 1753, in which he used the dictum "le style c'est l'homme même" [style is the man himself].

importance of genuine literary education, or to suppose that intellectual culture can be complete without it" (25). The tone of Huxley's reference to Arnold is very different to that of Leavis' attack on Snow or, indeed, Snow's comments about literary "Luddites" (22). Directly naming Arnold is not framed as an attack but as an acknowledgement of his position as an advocate for humanistic study, and as an invitation for a response.

Communication and negotiation are at work in their exchange. The further relevance of style is evidenced by a significant part of Huxley and Arnold's exchange consisting of a clarification of vocabulary. How one expresses a point of view is of high importance. Throughout numerous letters, each continually concedes and appreciates the other's point of view and associated vocabulary. For instance, in a letter dated 17 October 1880, Arnold explains that,

the dictum about knowing 'the best that has been known and said in the world' was meant to include knowing what has been said in science and art as well as letters. I remember changing the word *said* to the word *uttered*, because I was dissatisfied with the formula for seeming not to include art [...] however I went back to *said* for the base reason that the formula runs so much easier of the tongue with the shorter word. But I never doubted that the formula included science. (qtd. in Armytage 352 italic original)

Here, Arnold discusses the famous passage from *Culture and Anarchy*, in which he describes culture as the "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world" (193). As the central tenet of his view of culture, and the function of criticism, one might assume that Arnold would be stubborn in acknowledging any

fault with this conception. The above letter reveals how he is critically aware of the implications of language and remains adamant that science should be included in his broad definition of culture. This concession on Arnold's part reveals a deep concern for the critical analysis of language that remains at the heart of much humanistic study today. Arnold explains his language choice to Huxley with reference to rhetorical ease and a considered awareness of implicated meaning.

Irrespective of this aesthetic choice, which Arnold defends to Huxley, his 1880 Rede lecture makes an explicit concession in this regard. "I talk of knowing the best which has been thought and uttered in the world; Professor Huxley says this means knowing *literature*. Literature is a large word; it may mean everything written with letters or printed in a book" (220). Here we see the impact of cross-disciplinary conversation informing Arnold's expression with *said* being replaced by *uttered* as a gesture towards the inclusion of arts and science as discussed in the correspondence above. As Huxley named Arnold, so Arnold recognises Huxley. Despite its verbal inelegance, Arnold adopts 'utterance' in favour of 'saying' to emphasise the diversity of mediated knowledge.

The desire for the correct rhetorical expression of the idea of 'culture' is a recurrent theme throughout Arnold's career. He even eventually came to feel the limitations of his famous dictum "sweetness and light". Small's *The Value of the Humanities* identifies how Arnold acknowledged the "frippery" (83) of the phrase in an address at the University of Liverpool, 30 September 1882. She traces the literary and philosophical allusions of "sweetness and light": observing that there is "too much packed into it by way of historical and intellectual argument" (86). However, Small emphasises one way in which the expression functions effectively as a descriptor of cultural value, arguing that "sweetness and light" "marks the place at

which no terms will sustain their value for long as descriptors of certain things about culture which Arnold wants us to understand are valuable, but which depreciate as soon as they pass into a language of critical appreciation or evaluation” (86).

In the pursuit of the right words, Arnold captures the striving towards values that lie beyond the limitations of linguistic category, something that articulations of value in the humanities strive towards.

However, this pursuit of value should not be understood as an exclusively humanistic trait. Rorty demonstrates how this is equally the case within the philosophy of science. He explains how:

Gadamer once described the process of *Horizontverschmelzung* as what happens when ‘the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, not as the standpoint of which he is convinced or which he insists on, but rather as a possible opinion he puts into play and at risk.’ He [Gadamer] went on to describe this process as ‘the consummatory moment of conversation [*Vollzugsform des Gesprächs*] in which something is expressed [*eine Sache zum Ausdruck kommt*] that is neither my property nor that of the author of the text I am interpreting, but is shared’. (29)

This phrase is applicable to the exchange between Huxley and Arnold. The letters and lectures demonstrate a sense of playfulness with language and value, rather than treating them as part of a conflict. The aspiration towards that “consummatory moment of conversation” might not be fully realised, as the following section will detail, but each aspires towards a process of meaning-making that is shared. Their dialogue is not a contest of mutually exclusive opinions but rather represents a jostling for the immediacy of attention between literature and sciences. Rorty

describes how this is different from the conflict of Snow-Leavis because such rivalry “would not be thought of as controversies about who is in touch with reality and who is still behind the veil of appearances. They would be struggles to capture the imagination, to get other people to use one’s vocabulary” (28). Neither Arnold nor Huxley is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, instead, they are engaged in a persuasion for their preferred vocabulary. It is the tone of their argument that is of principal interest. Huxley and Arnold’s conversations, both in public and in private, clarify that there are two sets of ideas which cannot be fully aligned. However, each offers mutual respect and indicates a willingness to talk despite their disciplinary differences. Huxley describes how “the lesson of later life, is the renunciation of that encyclopaedic grasp the hope of which stirred the ambition of youth — and the resigning oneself to the conviction that in order to know one thing one must be content to be ignorant of thousands of things” (“On Literary Style”). That so much of their exchange concerns rhetoric demonstrates the significant value of precise and articulate language. Despite their diverse disciplinary expertise, each makes an effort to address areas where a fault is identified. Arnold continually insists on the value of the humanities in an increasingly technological world. Huxley wanted to forge a system of liberal education that included scientific discoveries in the physical sciences. However, the discussions between Arnold and Huxley do not mark a clear division between stasis and progress or between social knowledge and individual discovery. Instead, Arnold and Huxley are seen to subscribe to two alternative approaches to knowledge production that exists in harmony, reinforcing similar ends. The following section details how a common belief in liberal education enabled such considered and constructive correspondence.

3.2 “Darwin’s Bulldog” and “Our Chief Apostle of Culture”

Although both Arnold and Huxley had specific motivations, their interest in the reform of education from primary through to higher education was a common goal, and they respected the benefits of each other’s area of enquiry. Huxley was perhaps best known for coining the phrase ‘Darwinism’ and his career-long support of the evolutionary theorist earned him the nickname “Darwin’s Bulldog”.¹⁴ However, his aggression in defending Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution does not reflect upon his manner in conducting conversations concerning the relationship between science and literature. In fact, in many ways, Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) contains aspirations of tolerance inherent in a liberal education. For example, in *Darwinism, War and History* (1994), Paul Crook argues that “literature has undervalued Darwinism’s peace implications and especially Darwinism’s capacity for assimilation into traditional value systems” (192).¹⁵ Within the harsh biological fabric of evolutionary theory, Darwin listed examples of social cooperation and repression of individual desires in order to benefit society, or civilizations, at large. In his famous chapter, “Natural Selection”, Darwin notes how “in social animals it will adapt the structure of each individual for the benefit of the community; if each in consequence profits by the selected change” (Darwin 84). Driver ants form a prominent example and Darwin suggests that “we can see how useful their production may have been to a social community of insects, on the same principle that the division of labour is useful to civilized man” (219). *On the Origin of Species*, a book at the forefront of scientific knowledge is connected to Arnold’s efforts to promote self-cultivation as a means to a better society. In Darwin, the cultivation of a healthy “social community” (219) is recognised as being of benefit to the individual. This broadly encompasses

¹⁴ See Huxley, T. (1860) 569.

¹⁵ Further discussion of Crook’s work on Darwinism can be found in Gagnier R. (2010) 15.

the aspirations of science and the humanities alike: to provide a way for human beings, for humanity, to “profit by the selected change” (84). The precise means to “profit” (84) which Huxley and Arnold respectively favour may differ, but their general ambition is the same: the aspiration of these two eminent Victorians was the furtherance of a liberal education.

Arnold was relatively welcoming of the expansion of science within the university curricula. However, it must be acknowledged that Arnold’s attempt to include science within culture only extended so far as science that was readily contained within literary forms. For example, Arnold discusses the importance of the written works of Isaac Newton’s *Principia* (1687) and Euclid’s *Elements* (c. 300 BC). In this sense, Arnold remains restrictive in his remit of culture, as he only accesses science *through* literature. The experience of culture, for Arnold, is found in what can be read and what is written, detached from live scientific processes, such as experimentation. Arnold’s engagement with scientific knowledges was amateurish. As Fred Clarke writes in the introduction to William F. Connell’s *The Educational Thought and Influence of Matthew Arnold* (1950), it was a serious failure not “to realise that science was a necessary ingredient, growing in importance, of any conception of culture that could even then be called ‘adequate’” (xv). In his defence, Dinah Birch contends that Arnold “didn’t understand the development of scientific culture, as he simply never had the opportunity to encounter it” (qtd. in Bragg). Arnold does not actively seek to disregard the value of the sciences, rather has a limited experience of it.

While Arnold avoided engaging directly with scientific knowledge he gestured towards their mutual benefit in “General Conclusion: School Studies” published in *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (1868): “he whose aptitudes carry him to

the study of nature should have some notion of the humanities; he whose aptitudes carry him to the humanities should have some notion on the phenomena and laws of nature. Evidently, therefore the beginnings of a liberal culture should be the same for both" (300).¹⁶ This vision of liberal education includes both scientific and humanistic learning, not because they are different but because they can contribute to the same end. Both Arnold and Huxley recognised the importance of state intervention in education in order to achieve such reform. Each frequently cited examples from universities in Germany and France as evidence of the successes of a liberal education. Arnold's *A French Eton* (1864) presents his staunch belief in the successes of the French state intensive education programme in the development of lycée. In particular, Arnold celebrated "scientific instruction and the study of the mother-tongue which our school-course is without" (269). Praise of both science and modern literature demonstrates his awareness that educational improvement requires a broad range of disciplines. Although Arnold clearly cites the importance of scientific education, the "mother-tongue" (269) receives the greatest praise and critical attention. Arnold further records how the French "school-boy has a more real advantage over ours; he does certainly learn something of French language and literature" lamenting that "of the English, our schoolboy learns nothing" (270). Once more, Arnold's bias towards the value of the humanities is evident.

Huxley also urged for state intervention in education. Much like Arnold, his ideal was found in mainland Europe: "in Germany the universities are exactly what [...] the English universities are not [...] corporations of learned men devoting their lives to the cultivation of science" ("A Liberal Education" 107). The use of the word

¹⁶ These beginnings, for Arnold, include "the mother-tongue, the elements of Latin, and of the chief modern languages, the elements of history, of arithmetic and geometry, of geography, and of the knowledge of nature" (300). See Arnold, M. "General Conclusion: School Studies".

“cultivation” in reference to the sciences suggests an approach to learning that is focused on a rounded, rather than applied, education. Huxley’s interest in Continental Europe also included praise of subjects beyond his personal investment in the physical sciences. In a letter published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 October 1891, Huxley insisted that “the works of our great English writers are pre-eminently worthy of being systematically studied in our schools and universities as literature” (“Letter on University Education”). Clearly, an echo of Arnold’s *A French Eton*, such commentary reveals the cohesion in ideas between Arnold and Huxley despite their different backgrounds and principal interests.

3.3 Articulating the Value of a Liberal Education

The celebration of general cultivation and recognition of the benefits of multi-disciplinarity are clear indications of Huxley and Arnold’s shared view of the value of a liberal education. The following quotation from Huxley’s “Science and Culture” lecture, 1 October 1880, demonstrates some of the more complex relations to knowledge and culture that both Huxley and Arnold embraced. Huxley stated that:

I often wish that this phrase, ‘applied science,’ had never been invented. For it suggests that there is a sort of scientific knowledge of direct practical use, which can be studied apart from another sort of scientific knowledge, which is of no practical utility, and which is termed ‘pure science’. [...] Applied science is nothing but the application of pure science to particular classes of problems. It consists of deductions from those general principles, established by reasoning and observation, which constitute pure science. No one can safely make these deductions until he has a firm grasp of the principles; and he can obtain that

grasp only by personal experience of the operations of observation and of reasoning on which they are founded. (26)

In this passage, Huxley clarifies the value of “general principles” and challenges the idea that “applied sciences” are distinct from other scientific studies. Huxley is insistent that a firm grounding in pure scientific knowledge is required for all applied science. Much like Arnold, it is important for a scientist to grasp universally accepted knowledges, or “the best that has been thought and uttered in the world” (“Science and Literature” 220), before making his own applied or practical contribution.

Huxley’s approach to describing the strength of science as distinct from utility seems a long way from the languages of STEM centre research outcomes in the 2010s. His words promote a pursuit of a knowledge base without specific utility and this semantic distinction from the present outcome-driven approaches is a significant linguistic (and social) leap.

As noted above, there are significant differences between Arnold’s valuation of historical cultures and Huxley’s appreciation of the general principles of physical science. Although both value non-instrumental forms of education, it is worth noting that a prerequisite of scientific knowledge is that it is continually falsifiable. Huxley observes that,

the notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible [science] admits that all our interpretations of natural fact are more or less imperfect and symbolic, [...] it warns us that the assertion which outstrips evidence is not only a blunder but a crime.

(“Science and Culture” 22)

This reliance on the physical truth that is 'nature' is in many ways the opposite of Arnold's 'culture' and remains a fundamental distinction between Huxley and Arnold's thinking throughout their exchange. As Gesche Ipsen et al. suggest, Arnold would likely add "the caveat that what matters to humans is truth among words as much as, if not more than, truth among things" (*Provocation and Negotiation* 266). This difference in methodology is unresolved in the conversations, letters, and lectures of Arnold and Huxley. Despite their intention to speak *to* each other, not *against* one another, mutual misunderstandings leave a significant gap of incomprehension in their amicable exchange. Although their dialogue is imperfect, both Arnold and Huxley speak with a self-awareness of their own positions.

However, alongside differences, there are moments of recognition, or *Horizontverschmelzung*, (Gadamer's phrase for sharing horizons of intellect) which are worthy of reconsideration. For example, in a speech given at South London Working Men's College, 4 January 1868, Huxley maintained that "we must have History; treated not as a succession of battles and dynasties; not as a series of biographies; not as evidence that Providence has always been on the side of either Whigs or Tories; but as the development of man in times past, and in other conditions than our own" ("A Liberal Education" 109). To understand the development of humankind in this fashion and the significance of "other conditions than our own" does not deny the progress of science, but it does allow room for the valuation of the past. Such a statement offers hope that the value of the humanities might yet be understood not as a list, or a collection of dates, but as an active process of development and learning to understand others.

Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the contemporary split between the humanities and STEM within policy by retracing two seminal exchanges between the sciences and the humanities. Although distinct in tone and historical context, both examples demonstrate the importance of *how* value is articulated. In these moments of public expression and contest, *the way we argue* (to borrow Anderson's excellent expression) is more important than *what we are arguing about*. The attention to the value of words that is evident in Arnold and Huxley's exchange, and the productive mutation of meaning through their letters and lectures provide a model for considered scholarly communication that should be acknowledged and admired. Despite their disciplinary biases both worked towards the promotion of a liberal education that, they believed, would support the development of curricula, and the general cultivation of individuals within universities and beyond. Their appeal to roundness stands in stark contrast to the applied and instrumental valuations that face contemporary higher education.

Unfortunately, in many ways, the academy has inherited more from Snow and Leavis' debate than it has from Arnold and Huxley's exchange. The distinction between the two cultures continues to be produced, and re-produced, in a variety of ways. The systematic organisation of colleges within higher education institutions is one example; the coverage of artistic and scientific study in prescribed ways in the media is another. Just as Leavis enacted a close rhetorical deconstruction of Snow's claims about the two cultures, so too should scholars be attentive to the ways in which the humanities are defined by those who are not qualified to speak for them. Although the use of language in the Snow-Leavis exchange is less constructive, I argue that it serves as a useful example concerning the importance of *articulation* in

constructions of value. The form of the debate in public lectures reveals the power of an individual's voice to take control over "social event" (Collini *The Two Cultures, Rede Lecture 1959* xxviii). In the history of education, the importance of such speeches should not be overlooked.¹⁷

As suggested in part one, a concern about the two cultures of scientists and literary critics is not the most pressing concern in terms of contested sites of value within higher education. Instead, present antagonism comes from outside the academy, in the pressure of the monoculture of economic rationalism in policymaking that does not benefit knowledge production in either sector. Huxley argued that "there is no more complete fallacy" ("Science and Culture" 26) than the belief that applied skills need not rely on forms of pure science. Today, the government's support of specific kinds of STEM in light of their specific economic applications, represents a similar fallacy. There are numerous examples of how cuts to higher education budgets since 2008 have had an adverse effect on the sciences as well as the humanities. For example, in an open letter published in *Nature*, 8 October 2014, scientists affiliated with the organisation EuroScience firmly state that:

despite what some politicians believe, applied research is unlikely to have much immediate impact on the market. Marketable research products are the low-hanging fruit of an intricate research tree, and undermining basic research will slowly kill the roots [scientific research] should not just serve the economy, but also aspire to increase knowledge. ("A Call To Those Who Care")

¹⁷ Most famously, J.S. Mill's "Inaugural Address delivered to the University of St. Andrews" 1 February 1867. See also John Newman's Lectures, 1852 at the Catholic University in Ireland which were the basis of *The Idea of a University*, and John Ruskin's "Traffic", delivered in the Town Hall, Bradford, 1864.

Attached to the open letter was a petition that, as of April 2018, 19,317 people had signed since 8 October 2014. The petition “They Have Chosen Ignorance” iterates clearly that “they” stands for the policymaker: “they have chosen to ignore that applied research is no more than the application of basic research and is not limited to research with short-term market impact” (Moro-Martín et al.). The echoes of Huxley are strong in this petition, perhaps nowhere more so than in the closing sentence. The cultivation of individual education is not a redundant concern from the nineteenth century. Huxley concludes his 1880 lecture with the question: “if we could mould the fates to our own will” what kind of education “would [we] give our children?” (“Science and Culture” 81). In a recapitulation of a liberal view of education, the scientists authoring this open letter “call on researchers and citizens to defend this position with us. [...] We owe it to our children, and to the children of our children” (Moro-Martín et al.). If Huxley’s question is still relevant, there might also be value in Arnold’s response. In *Culture and Anarchy*, he argues that:

our poor culture, which is flouted as so unpractical, leads us to the very ideas capable of meeting the great want of our present embarrassed times! We want an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a dead-lock; culture suggests the idea of the State. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in *our best self*. (99)

Although universally unattainable under the present conditions of higher education, certain aspects of a liberal education can still be useful as ideals. In “The Limbs of Osiris: Liberal Education in the English-Speaking World.” (1993) Sheldon Rothblatt argues that the “ideal resembles an experiment [... which] may or may not work in practice, but its value is in the trying and reaching” (70). This allows one to “explore

alternatives and to exercise a creative reach in order to prevent human life from being overrun by the humdrum and banal” (70). The potential of imaginative and fictional articulation of value will be explored in the following chapter. In a move away from thinking only within the limits of economic policy, a turn towards ideals offers an escape from “the humdrum and banal” (70). However, this is not only the task of the humanities: “there is, after all, a level at which science and literature begin with the same question: what if?” (Biggsby “Art and Science”). The sciences and the humanities must strive to coordinate their efforts across disciplinary distinctions in the current debate concerning value in higher education.

Twenty-five years after the two cultures debate, in 1984, Thomas Pynchon argued that “today nobody could get away with making such a distinction” (“Is it O.K. to be a Luddite?”). In 2007, Toby Miller reasserts a similarly utopic image where “young computer scientists are playing in the same virtual environments as young literary critics” (41). With increasing technical specialisation (databases, hypertext mark-up), the advent of digital practices (big data, distant reading), and collaboration (neurolinguistics, bio-ethics, cultural mapping) the humanities and the sciences are more often in conversation as opposed to conflict on an interpersonal level.

Policymaking practices since the 1980s have suggested otherwise. In the languages and actions of policy, the two disciplinary groups are hierarchised. In this narrative, the humanities and sciences are currently facing a greater adversary than one another. Whilst Small notes in the opening pages of *The Value of the Humanities* “there are clear and definitive differences between the kind of work pursued in the different faculties of universities” (4) these need not be perceived as being in conflict. In the preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, included in 1869, Arnold argues that “to convince those who mechanically serve some stock notion or operation” it is

essential to “turn a free and fresh stream of thought upon the whole matter in question” (192). This chapter has identified how specific attentiveness to language has served the humanities in internal debates in higher education. It emphasises that the process of articulation and revision are natural aptitudes of the humanities. The following chapter questions whether or not such attention to reading, rhetoric, and the way the humanities are represented in fiction can be a productive site for further disrupting the external pressures and definitions regarding the value of the humanities.

CHAPTER THREE

The Relationship Between Academic Fiction and Academic Life

Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which fiction about universities can contribute to an articulation of the value of the humanities in the present moment. In *Imagining the Academy: Higher Education and Popular Culture* (2002) Susan Edgerton makes an explicit argument for the prolonged interrogation of fictional representation in debates concerning economic pressures and value within contemporary higher education: “in an institution that is increasingly operating as a corporation, we are continually striving to ‘please the customer,’ as if we know what the customer wants” (2). For Edgerton, media representation opens up a space between universities and popular opinion by revealing the desires of the student-as-consumer. However, I argue that this market-centred justification neglects the further potential that novels and other media can have in this debate; using literature in pursuit of understanding “customer wants” (2) remains too closely aligned to close the “monochromatic discourse” (Collini, *What Are Universities For?* 95) of contemporary policymaking. In the face of league tables, accountability indexes, and the impact agenda, it is evident that within the formal structures of the academy “there is no outside” (Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 331) of the discursive power of empirical valuation. However, humanities scholars should be attentive to alternative indicators that might open up new possibilities in the articulation of value. Stuart Hall develops Michel Foucault’s hypothesis on discursive power in “The West and the Rest” (1992) arguing that

“discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: ‘discursive practice’ – the practice of producing meaning. Since all social practices entail meaning, all practices have a discursive aspect” (201). What follows in this chapter is an investigation into an alternative discourse of value is that developed through representing the value of the humanities in academic fiction.¹ Such literary scholarship can challenge the linear shift towards economic discourse. I argue that the *act of telling* tales is an important way of reasserting more imaginative values. In “University Life in English Fiction” Philip Hobsbaum describes how “it is in fiction that experience tends to be most vividly rendered. It is this concern for the individual that tends to be left out of our discussions about universities. What one misses among the statistics is the human sense of the place” (20). He argues that concentrating on policy alone overlooks the human experience of education: fictional discourse captures values that white papers cannot. “A white paper can give us the general pattern, but it may not tell us how it feels to be an undergraduate” (Hobsbaum 20). This chapter explores the kinds of storytelling that represents value in higher education, and argues that the value of the humanities can be articulated through engagement with literary representation. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first part outlines why using academic fiction is a good tool to discuss the marketisation of higher education; the second part defines the genre of academic fiction and explores its enduring appeal; the third part provides three literary readings that build upon the theory and context outlined in part one and part two.

¹ The term ‘academic fiction’ refers to a corpus of novels concerning life within and around a university and represents a broader category than campus novels. See further discussion of terminology in section 2.0.

1.0 Using Academic Fiction as a Discursive Tool

Using academic literature as source material for understanding the value of higher education is an emergent but growing field of scholarship. Many publications since 2000 have pointed towards popular culture, including literary fiction, as a site for understanding public attitudes concerning higher education.² To date, Elaine Showalter has provided the most extensive study of the varying political influences of campus fiction in *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and its Discontents* (2005). Showalter pairs specific decades with significant corresponding debates within the academy. Accordingly, the 1980s are “feminist towers” and the 1990s are “tenured towers”, in response to the political and social changes of these times. Showalter identifies that “academic novels are rarely in sync with their decade of publication; most reflect the preceding decade’s issues, crises and changes” (15). Following Showalter’s schema relies on the retrospective forces of canonisation in order to plot key debates in the representation of universities. In these terms, literary encapsulation of the current situation (post-2010) in higher education is yet to be written.³

However, present changes within higher education are rooted in neoliberal policymaking initiated during the 1980s, and therefore are reflective of a longer history of economisation in education in England. In *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays* (2006), Merritt Moseley pronounces that “academic novels since the rise of Margaret Thatcher reflect, or react to, the changes in status and funding for Higher Education” (14). As chapter four details more extensively, the foundations of

² See Reynolds, P. (2014) vii-ix; Edgerton & Farber (2005); Tierney, W. (2004).

³ Showalter titles the twenty-first century section of her book “Tragic Towers”, thus reflecting the crisis narrative of humanities scholars who are fearful and defensive about the future.

privatisation within cultural policymaking was initiated during Margaret Thatcher's administration. Frank Parkin's *The Mind and Body Shop* (1986) is a novel that challenges the prevalence of neoliberal management in universities prior to the recent changes since 2008 (see section 5.2). Therefore, I argue that drawing upon fiction published since 1985 can inform a reader about the effects of the marketisation of higher education today.

In an episteme where the value of higher education is increasingly measured through numerical data, turning towards an analysis of fiction goes against the current expectations. However, the process of rendering reality into academic fiction can be beneficial; the imaginative space of a novel allows for greater freedom of interpretation. Novels about universities act as funhouse mirrors within which humanities researchers can recognise their own values and actions. Although an apparent sign of "ultimate narcissism", Showalter admits that her "favourite academic novels are about English departments" (3). In fiction about the experience of contemporary university life, the humanities scholar is able to experience what Victor Shklovsky describes as defamiliarization (*ostranenie*).⁴ The mundane is made strange in the process of fiction. This is, in fact, a tactic suggested by a character in David Lodge's academic novel *Small World* (1984). Professor Morris Zapp, a fictional highbrow literary critic, refers to the notion of "ostranenie" (77) as a solution to the monotony of assuming one position in the world. Zapp explains how "literature was all about [defamiliarization]" and argues that "art exists to help us recover the sensation of life" (77). Throughout Lodge's novel, Zapp identifies the ways in which fiction enables a scholar to articulate parts of the human experience that are harder

⁴ See Shklovsky, V. "Art as Technique" (1917).

to articulate through other kinds of writing about the humanities, such as critical theory or historical analysis.

Reading academic fiction in this way takes the realities of higher education and transforms them into new objects of study. Assuming the theory of *ostranenie*, the novel is able to invoke fresh conversations, from defamiliarised perspectives, concerning the values of the humanities. In *Understanding Fiction* (1959) Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren argue, in line with Shklovsky, that “the fictional form [actually] gives point and definition to the social commentary” (76) as opposed to being “simply ‘dress[ing] up’ a specific comment on human nature” (76). They reason that the relationship between fiction and reality is capable of productive potential. In *On Moral Fiction*, (1978) John Gardner explains the way in which

we recognize art by its careful, thoroughly honest search for and analysis of values. It is not didactic because, instead of teaching by authority and force, it explores, open-mindedly, to learn what it should teach. It clarifies, like an experiment in a chemistry lab, and confirms. As a chemist’s experiment tests the laws of nature and dramatically reveals the truth or falsity of scientific hypotheses, moral art tests values and rouses trustworthy feelings about the better and the worse in human action. (19)

Whilst much scholarship to date has focused on how academics are represented within the genre, academic novels also contain political commentary and criticism of other aspects of the university system. The work of the humanities is as worthy as the “chemist’s experiment”; however, it is necessary to employ a different methodology since such work seeks to articulate a complex web of values, beyond

simple “truth or falsity” (19). In order to better understand the uses of academic novels, section two of this chapter defines academic fiction as a distinct category of literary work.

2.0 Defining Academic Fiction

This section presents a summary of the appeal of academic fiction, discusses popular settings, and examines the relationship between subject matter and formal style within the genre. In contemporary scholarship concerning fiction about universities, the term *academic novel* is preferable to *campus novel* since many stories are set beyond campus grounds, in archives, at home, or at elegant soirees.⁵ Therefore, the phrase academic fiction is used throughout this discussion to refer to the genre of novels that represent university life in this wider sense.

2.1 Understanding the Appeal of Academic Fiction

In a humorous article published in the *Times Higher Education*, 16 August 1996, Adrian Mourby asked: “Why did solicitors never capture the popular imagination? Whatever happened to the dental novel? What’s wrong with accountants?” (“The Question’s Academic”).⁶ Academic fiction has a long history of enduring appeal.⁷ However, the Victorian period saw an increasing number of literary works make reference to university life and scholarship as educational institutions proliferated in England. In *Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community* (2002), Kenneth Womack draws attention to the nineteenth-century tradition of satirical fiction predominantly centred on undergraduate life at Oxbridge.⁸ Educational reforms

⁵ I follow the definition of “campus novel” and “academic novel” outlined in Moseley (2007) viii, see similar definition in Williams, J. J. (2012) 561-2.

⁶ If one were interested in constructing a “dental canon” perhaps they might consider Frank Norris’ *McTeague* (1899), William Goldman’s *Marathon Man* (1974), and most recently Joshua Ferris’ *To Rise Again At a Decent Hour* (2014).

⁷ In fact, academics have been represented in fiction since antiquity; see Aristophanes’ satire of Athenian intellectual fashions in *The Clouds* (423 BC).

⁸ For further discussion of Victorian satire concerning universities see Proctor, M. (1957) 11-50.

during the nineteenth century led to greater attention being paid to the significance of higher education in the work of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Anthony Trollope. In “On English Prose as a Rational Amusement” (1870) Trollope observed that “we have become novel reading people” (108). Later, in his autobiography, he reflected on the impact of his own academic fictions, suggesting how *Barchester Towers* (1857) had “become one of those novels which do not die quite at once, which live and are read for perhaps a quarter of a century” (139). Trollope was overly conservative in his estimation of the longevity of his readership. Increased literacy and broader distribution of literature meant that early academic fiction was, and remains today, widely read. Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1859), Max Beerbohm’s *Zuleika Dobson* (1911), and Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House* (1925) are examples of early academic novels that remain in print.⁹ Beyond this, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century saw the expansion of the broader category of the *Künstlerroman* [artist’s novel] in English literature with prominent examples such as Henry James’ *Roderick Hudson* (1875), James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise* (1920). The significance of nineteenth-century literary and intellectual culture is also represented in the subject matter of contemporary academic fictions. Showalter recognises that “many of the most successful academic novels of the past fifty years have been rewritings of Victorian novels” (9). For example, *Nice Work* (1988) by David Lodge is a rewriting of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855)

⁹ Although *Tom Brown at Oxford* is only available in an edition with the more widely read *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* published by Wordsworth (1993).

and A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) is an ode to Victorian correspondence and literary lives.¹⁰

The emergence of the canon of academic fiction in England is cited to have emerged following the Second World War.¹¹ George Watson argues that in the 1950s the genre “started what by now looks like its continuous life with C. P. Snow's *The Masters* in 1951 and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* two years later” (42). Showalter's survey in *Faculty Towers* begins with the same two examples of Snow and Amis (see “Ivory Towers” 17- 41). Clearly, to credit Amis (or to Leavis' imagined horror, Snow) with the foundation of an entirely new genre is erroneous, given the longer history identified above. Nevertheless, post-war academic fiction possesses certain distinctive properties that Amis was among the first to draw upon. Focusing on professors as opposed to students was a significant shift, as was the inclusion of a whole cast of academics as opposed to a single character study. Visiting Philip Larkin at University College in Leicester during the spring term of 1946, Amis encountered inspiration in the common room.¹² He describes the moment when he realised the underutilised potential of using academic characters in fiction, reflecting how, “I thought at once, ‘Christ, somebody ought to do something about *this*’” (“Real and Made Up People” 847). Amis reflects on this pivotal moment further in *Memoirs* (2004) as being the moment of discovering “a whole mode of existence no one had got onto from outside” (56) with a cast of ready-made characters.

Since Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge became two of the most renowned authors within the genre, achieving great popularity with *The History Man*

¹⁰ Showalter's *Faculty Towers* also cites George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) which was reworked by Gail Godwin in *The Odd Woman* (1974) see *Faculty Towers* 9.

¹¹ For American fictions see Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of the Academe* (1952), Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954), and Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* (1957).

¹² Larkin authored an academic novel, albeit from a student perspective, in *Jill* (1946) written between 1943-4, when he was an undergraduate at St John's College, Oxford.

(1975) and *Changing Places* (1975) respectively. Recognition of academic novels in literary prizes provided further proof of the success of the genre in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century. For example, Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* won the Man Booker Prize in 1990. Ana-Karina Schneider describes the novel as a "fetishisation not only of the written word but of any object associated with writing, and with its well-rehearsed scepticisms and theory-informed wrangling over meaning" (5). Despite being a novel entirely about the processes of studying English, *Possession* captured the popular imagination beyond academia. The success of contemporary academic fiction in terms of readership and prizes suggests that academic life is an alluring setting for the public. A 2015 YouGov survey of "The Most Desirable Jobs in Britain" affirms the enduring popularity of the academic profession as a desirable life choice amongst the general population. In analysing the YouGov survey, Will Dahlgreen identifies "an aura of prestige still surround[ing] the quiet, intellectual life enjoyed by authors, librarians and academics" ("Bookish Britain: literary jobs are the most desirable"). The survey was based on responses from 15,000 UK citizens, 51% of whom stated that they would like the job of an academic, placing it in the top three jobs for both the women and men surveyed (see figure one). The top three jobs all involve working with books. Dahlgreen notes that the results suggest that respondents prefer jobs that involving deskwork, some degree of personal choice, and space for scholarly thought.

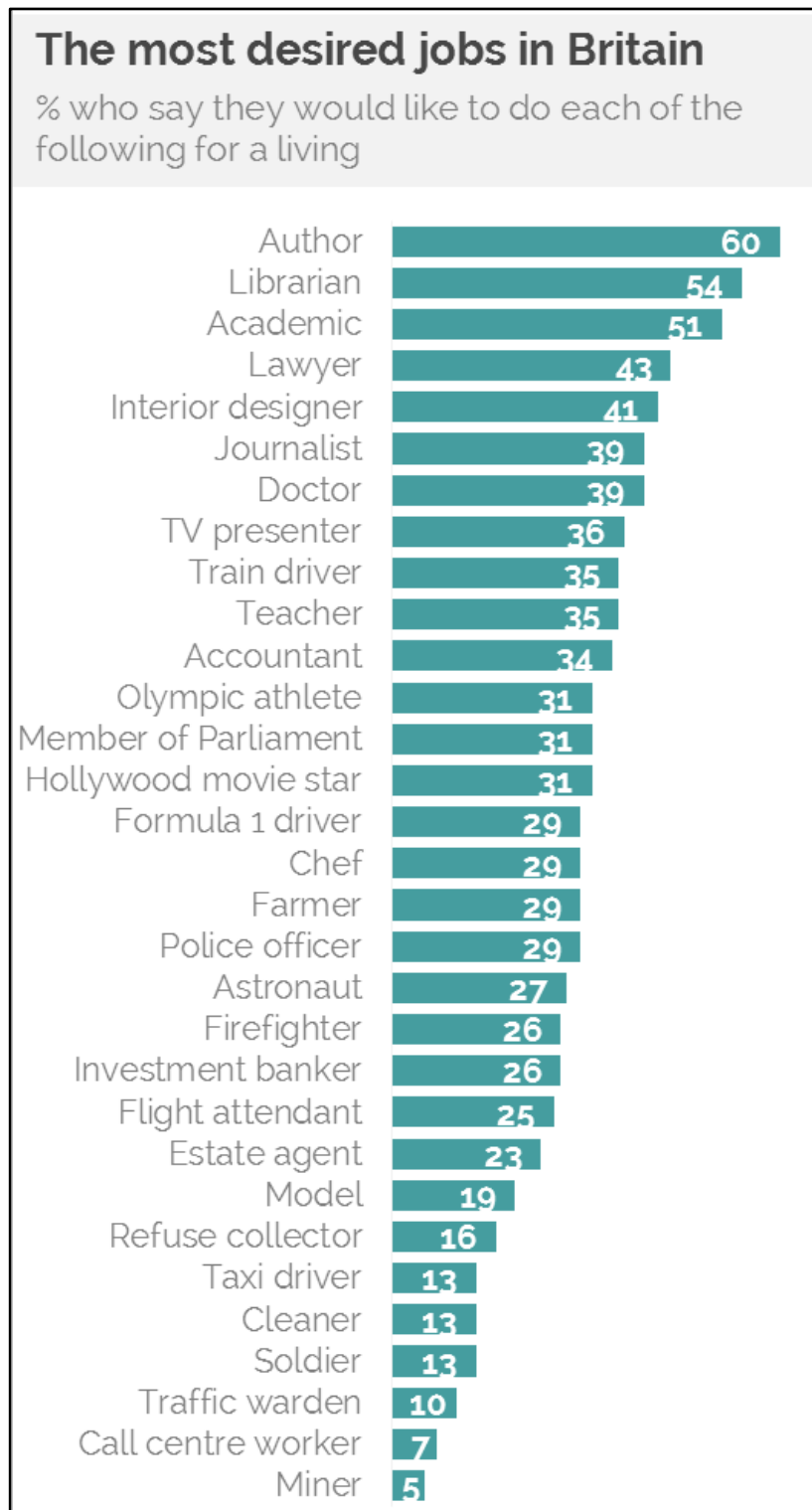


Figure 1: "The Most Desired Jobs in Britain." YouGov UK Survey (12-13 January 2015).

Terry Eagleton offers an excellent account of the popularity of campus fiction in his essay “The Silences of David Lodge” published in the *New Left Review* in November 1988:

the university has the glamour of the deviant and untypical, providing the novelist with a conveniently closed world marked by intellectual wrangling, political infighting and sexual intrigue. Yet in its bureaucratic routines and down-at-heel dreariness it is also sufficiently continuous with the wider society to act as a microcosm of middle-class mores. It is neither too hermetically sealed from the social order to be of merely specialist interest, nor too commonplace to be merely tedious. The ‘campus’ novel thus provides one kind of solution to a problem which has never ceased to dog the modern English novel, and which is nothing less than how ordinary social experience is to offer a fertile soil for fictional creation. (93)

Here, Eagleton demonstrates how an academic setting for fiction allows a precarious balance between the general and the particular to be achieved. David Lodge famously maintained that “the university is a kind of microcosm of society at large, in which the principles, drives and conflicts that govern collective human life are displayed and may be studied in a clear light and on a manageable scale” (*Write On* 169). Therefore, it might be understood that the changes felt within a university are representative of wider social transformations beyond the campus. The scaling down of societal concerns within the microcosm of a university allows for intervention in an otherwise unmanageably large or abstract context.

The imaginary and contained world of the campus novel also serves as a common reference point. Readers of academic novels today are likely current or former undergraduate students. The rapid increase of student numbers, up 44% in the last fifty years, is a result of the expansion of higher education, meaning that many readers today can relate to representations of universities in fiction. Writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 September 2000, Jay Parini affirms that “today’s readers were once students themselves, and they still wonder what went on behind closed office doors and in the homes of their professors” (13). An interest in understanding what happens behind closed doors grows as higher education institutions appear more professionalised and corporate from the perspective of the undergraduate student. The appeal of academic fiction may continue to grow as increasing numbers of young people become graduates, leave higher education, and look towards fiction as an opportunity to reflect, for better or worse, on their experience of the university.

2.2 Situation and Settings for the Academic Novel

In *Literature Against Criticism: University English and Contemporary Fiction in Conflict* (2016) Martin Paul Eve argues that “the academy is woven more broadly and more deeply into the fabric of the contemporary fiction scene than might be supposed were an investigation limited to works that focus on depictions of the university” (19). Whether located on campus or off, the most frequent setting within which to reliably locate the academic novel is amongst the social interactions of an

English department.¹³ A list of the most renowned academic fictions highlights how this discipline dominates. Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952), Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Williams' *Stoner* (1965), David Lodge's campus trilogy (1975-88), Michael Chabon's *Wonder Boys* (1995) and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) all place an English faculty at their centre. Since the millennium, there has been a further proliferation of English professors represented in literary fiction including Percival Everett's *Erasure* (2001), Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (2004), and Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* (2015). The following discussion considers why the subject of English is such used so recurrently in representing scholarly life in contemporary academic fiction.

Steven Connor observes that "the fact that most campus novels tend to be about English teachers or students [...] is of course not very surprising even given the hostility to traffic or fraternization between the critical and creative realms characteristic of the teaching of English literature since the War" (70). Many authors of academic fictions held creative writing posts within literature departments, including Amis (predominantly University of Wales, Swansea), Bradbury (University of East Anglia) and Lodge (most famously at the University of Birmingham).¹⁴ The emergence of undergraduate and postgraduate creative writing courses within English departments further solidified this bond. Bradbury conceived of and established the first British creative writing course at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in 1970.¹⁵ To date, the Complete University Guide lists over 500

¹³ There, of course, are many examples from other disciplines. See for example, Bradbury's *History Man* (History); Delillo's *White Noise* (Hitler Studies); Tartt's *The Secret History* and Roth's *The Human Stain* (both Classics).

¹⁴ Further contemporary examples include Zadie Smith drawing on Harvard (*On Beauty* 2005) and Philip Hensher's inspiration at the University of Exeter (*King of the Badgers* 2011).

¹⁵ The formalisation of the creative writing within universities has deeper historical roots in the US than in Britain. The University of Iowa Writers' Workshop was the first creative writing degree program in the United States and was founded in 1936.

undergraduate and over 400 postgraduate creative writing courses available in 2015-16.¹⁶ Therefore, the dominance of English professors may be a result of the *write what you know* approach to creative writing.¹⁷ Michael Frayn, author of the academic novel *The Trick of It* (1989), speculates that “ninety seven per cent of novelists were once themselves students [...] and believe they could have been academics themselves, if only they had not had better things to do than write weekly essays and pass exams” (qtd. in Mourby). The continued experience of life within an English department has a bearing on the minds of several generations of writers of academic fiction.

Further correlation between authors and literary academics is found beyond the formal instruction provided by universities. For instance, many contemporary novelists depend on the university environment as a source of financial support for their writing career. The Royal Literary Fund’s Fellowship Scheme explicitly encourages professional writers to work within universities. The fund’s founder, Hilary Spurling describes how the programme aims to “break down divisions, build up contacts and stimulate the living language, to relieve cultural poverty and linguistic distress as well as lightening the financial and material pressures weighing so heavily at present on the whole company of authors” (“RLF Fellowship Scheme”). Spurling expresses the desire for academics and authors to connect in order to generate better creative and critical work, despite the economic pressures of the time.

¹⁶ This includes postgraduate taught and research programmes.

¹⁷ Giles Foden, Professor of Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, describes how “ninety-four British universities offer a range of postgraduate degrees in creative writing and in any one year there are usually more than 10,000 short-term creative writing courses or classes on offer in the UK”. See “Sufficient Event” (2011).

Matthew Arnold's *The Function of Criticism in the Present Time* (1865) ranks the art of creative writing above that of academic, or critical, work: "the sense of creative activity belongs only to genuine creation; in literature we must never forget that" (51). However, Arnold observes how "the grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition" which is reliant on a "certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas" (28). Applied to the relationship between novelists and universities in England today, writers within humanities departments are synthesisers who are able to expose values of their educational environment within literary creation. Academic fiction finds its "certain intellectual" home within the English department. However, in addition to the practical associations outlined above, I propose a secondary reason as to why English is the recurrent site for academic fiction: the processes of reading and critique are inherent in the practices of the discipline. "We should begin to read these novels less in terms of their actual brilliance or success" argues Janice Rossen, "and more in terms of what they reveal about the dynamics of power between the contemporary novelist and his audience" (188). Considered in this manner, the work of academic fiction as critique bears similarities to the work of scholarly literary criticism. Novels are explorations of literary expression, and the subject of English offers the closest affinity within the academic humanities.

Eve's *Literature Against Criticism* goes as far to position English and contemporary fiction as being in direct competition. He explores how novels about academics can be considered metafictional in their use of "a series of novelistic techniques that [...] function to outmanoeuvre, contain, and determine academic reading practices" (15). Novels about universities, Eve argues, represent an "anxiety of academia within the space of literary production" (16). Contemporary fiction is not

hampered with by same fears or constraints and is, therefore, able to operate within the literary marketplace more successfully. The examples of contemporary novels in *Literature Against Criticism* offer a convincing exposition of an anxiety within the academy, that novelists could better do the work of social critique than the critics themselves. Eve examines how in contemporary fiction, a postmodern scepticism for institutional authority combines with the kind of novelistic “knowing” inherent in Joyce’s “many enigmas and puzzles that will keep professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant” (qtd. in Ellmann James Joyce 521). Should university English be concerned about the success with which contemporary fiction conveys literary kinds of knowledge? Eve concentrates on locating the academy within the market wherein “academic aesthetic judgement form[s] only a weaker correlative portion of the gatekeeping system” (22) of literary knowledge production. However, this chapter takes a wider survey of the genre of academic fiction and avoids market-centred discussions oriented around publishing, sales, and literary prizes. Rita Felski notes that, in the discipline of English, “the works that we study and teach [...] could never come to our attention without the work of countless helpers” within the literary industry, including “publishers, advertisers, critics, prize committees, reviews” (170). However, her list concludes: “last, but not least, the passions and predilections of ourselves” (170). Instead of regarding the relationship of literature and university English the context of the market, in competition with one another for literary authority, scholars might pursue a more collaborative (and Arnoldian) symbiosis with fiction.

Beyond the competition of publication and sales in the literary sphere, novels *do* offer something different from academic research. Academic novels create imaginative reflections of higher education that are not beholden to the realities of

the present. In turning away from a discussion of economic value, and refusing to speak only in these terms, humanities scholarships can be “jolted out of this kind of numbed acquiescence and reminded that words are our masters as well as our servants” (Collini, *What Are Universities For?* 95). If we accept that “words are our masters” then it is imperative to explore a vernacular that extends beyond “competition”, “ranking”, “growth”, and “excellence”. As chapter one and two have already demonstrated, an alternative expression of value is lacking in contemporary policymaking. This is not the case within contemporary fiction. The next section demonstrates how the formal properties of the academic novel are essential to this generative representation while paying specific attention to how these formal properties engage with representations of the humanities.

2.3 Subject Matter and Style in Academic Fiction

Academic fictions are primarily focused on the lives, concerns and interactions of academics. In *Imagining the Academy*, Edgerton explains that “I know that life as a professor is a privileged life in so many ways [with] work that can challenge and reward one’s creative spirit” (1). Edgerton recognises the appeal of an academic life that allows for intellectual debate and philosophical reflectiveness. Although students appear in most academic fictions, the central characters are those that Showalter calls “the lifers” (2). Whilst being a student is only ever a transitional and temporary state, the experience of being an academic is more permanent.¹⁸ In 1980, Richard

¹⁸ That is not to say that novels about student life, such as Philip Larkin’s *Jill* (1926), or David Nicholls’ *Starter for Ten* (2003), do not offer representations of university life that are equally worthy of study. For discussion of student representations see Walkerdine, V. (1990); Edgerton & Farber (2005); Deresiewicz, W. (2007); Terzian & Ryan (2015).

Caram coined the term *Professorroman*, an adult counterpart to the juvenile *bildungsroman*, to describe a novel which follows an academic's life.¹⁹ In the *bildungsroman*, a reader follows an individual's formative years. Ensuing follies and faults are overcome, with the naiveties and errors of youth being part of the necessary journey to adult responsibility. However, no such relief is permitted for the protagonist of the *Professorroman* who has already attained the supposed wisdom of adulthood.

John Williams' *Stoner* (1965) is an illuminating example of the *Professorroman*. The novel tracks the life of William Stoner, from his application to study as an undergraduate at the University of Missouri to his reflections at the end of his life and career. Stoner describes his research as "a haven, an excuse to come to the office at night. He read and studied, and at last came to find some comfort, some pleasure, and even a ghost of the old joy in that which he did, a learning toward no particular end" (131). Here the reader gains an insight into the process of unending pursuit of learning that is inherent in an academic *life*, as opposed to an academic job. Writing for the *Times Higher Education*, 12 September 2013, Christopher Bigsby argued that "the value that Stoner ascribes to literature, to a precision of language, each word in its place, is that to be found in this novel, which is remarkable precisely to the degree to which it is unflinching in its observation and stunning in its humanity" ("Stoner"). Here, Bigsby raises an important point that *Stoner* identifies the benefit of a life spent in the humanities, not simply through its content but also through its form. The novel encapsulates a vision of slow and steady scholarship and "learning toward no particular end" (*Stoner* 131). As Williams' explains about his creation of Stoner: "he might not have been a very good teacher, but that didn't matter much. He was

¹⁹ See Caram, R. (1980) 42.

witness to values that are important” (qtd. in Asquith 110). The novel explores the lack of fanfare surrounding the action of upholding academic integrity and a quiet solace that can be found in a life in literature.

Stoner is a novel that has only recently achieved popular acclaim and received increasing critical recognition. First published in 1965, a second edition was not published until 2003. In *Reading the Novels of John Williams: A Flaw of Light* (2018), the first scholarly monograph to exclusively focus on John Williams’ literary works and life, Mark Asquith argues that the renaissance of *Stoner* was a “peculiarly European affair” (3), despite being heralded as a great American novel. He notes how this may be in part due to the attention that the French novelist, Anna Gavalda, gave to the text in 2011, in buying the rights and translating the text from English to French before publishing the book with her name on the flyleaf. Gavalda reflects that “when all the other European editors saw that it was me who translated this book, they were all curious about why Anna Gavalda translated it, and so they all bought the rights” (qtd. in Asquith 2). Asquith’s opening chapter charts “the *Stoner* phenomenon” (2) that took place between 2011-13 when Williams’ seldom read title became Julian Barnes’ “must read novel of 2013” (*The Guardian* 13 December 2013) and Tim Kreider’s “The Greatest American Novel You’ve Never Heard Of” (*New Yorker* 20 October 2013). The renewed popularity of such a novel in this period of rapid change to higher education is noteworthy. Writing in *The Globe and Mail*, 7 December 2013, Sarah Hampson observes that perhaps,

it is simply a matter of a book finding its perfect moment. We live in an era in which happiness and success are pursued ruthlessly, selfishly. We feel entitled to have them, at any cost [...] this is a novel that serves as an antidote to that

expectation, reminding us that a life that looks like a failure from the outside, that will be quickly forgotten once it ends, can be a noble, quirky and somehow beautiful experience. (Hampson)

Stoner offers an alternative expression of experience within a competitive and task-oriented research climate. Academic fictions that document an entire life are able to represent the experience of humanities scholarship on a scale that would be impossible to articulate in its lived practice. Fictions are, therefore, able to capture values within the academic experience that might otherwise remain elusive.

Martha Nussbaum discusses the connection between the novel form and lived experiences in *Love's Knowledge* (1990), arguing that the novel can act as an education in liberal values. She observes that in a novel "form and style are not incidental features. A view of life is told" (5). Nussbaum argues that the formal properties of a novel are tied to the values it conveys and, in fact, assists in generating those values. She notes how:

the selection of genre, formal structures, sentences, vocabulary, of the whole manner of addressing the reader's sense of life — all of this expresses a sense of life and of value, a sense of what matters and what does not, of what learning and communicating are, of life's relations and connections. Life is never simply presented by a text; it is always represented as something. (5)

The articulation of the value of the humanities in an academic novel is not only conveyed in the subject matter but also in the style and space of the story. In his meditation on the experience of reading in *The Space of Literature* (1955) Maurice

Blanchot observes that “language is affirmed in literature with more authority than in any other form of human activity. [...] Words, we know, have the power to make things disappear, to make them appear as things that have vanished” (43). In *The Space of Literature*, fiction creates the opportunity for liminal and imaginative space in which ideas can be created and communicated. Blanchot describes how “the work is a work only when it becomes the intimacy shared by someone who writes it and someone who reads it, a space violently opened up by the contest between the power to speak and the power to hear” (37). Fictional writing is transformative in its ability to articulate particular ideas and general values. Within the specific setting of an academic novel, the day-to-day actions essential to convincingly representing life in a university are combined with broader philosophical and literary enquiries. For example, *On Beauty* uses a domestic affair and an academic rivalry as a reconsideration of the relationship between critical and aesthetic theory (see section 5.3). Smith finds an environment with a small enough scope to summon realistic details and the benefit of the freedom to ask large philosophical questions about value. The campus, or even more precisely, the corridors in the English department provide a particular space in which to tell a story that can represent certain values.

The third part of this chapter turns to a series of fictional explorations. Unlike analysis of *characters* within literature the following readings expose the disciplinary *character* of the humanities. Although it is possible to tease out impressions of the humanities from a great many campus novels, the specific examples selected allow for depictions of value to shine most intensely. Previous scholarship has provided extensive taxonomies of academic fiction (see Carter 1990), general surveys (see Moseley 2007), and histories of genre development (see Showalter 2005). Here, I offer a specific selection of academic fictions that best articulate the value of

humanistic learning and life. I draw upon a range of academic fictions from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. First, analysis of Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1859) and Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992) initiates an examination of the qualities of a liberal education in the humanities. The second section analyses the lived experiences of humanities scholarship in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871) and A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990). Here, the connection between the physical action of scholarship and a more philosophical reflection of value is explored at length. The third and final investigation interrogates the context of economisation from Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1894), to contemporary examples of Frank Parkin's *The Mind and Body Shop* (1986) and Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005). In doing so, I explore the potential of reading fictions as a tool to disrupt the monotonous language of economic profit. The following three investigations collectively reveal a rich field of representation of the character of the humanities. I use the word 'investigation' as each section asks a specific question of the academic novel: first, how do representations rooted in history and nostalgia represent the humanities? Second, in what ways can novels articulate the processes of scholarship, and the benefits that such a pursuit creates? Third, how can novels critique economic norms and create space for alternative values in education?

3.0 Investigation One: The Qualities of a Liberal Education

Despite a resolve to focus on “the lifers” (Showalter 2) of the humanities, the fictional examples in this investigation centre on the experience of education from a student’s point of view. I argue that in representing humanities *teaching*, the abstract ideas that surround the qualities of a liberal education are made evident. Without the student, a representation of an educator is redundant. Therefore, in this specific instance, student-led academic fiction plays an active role in articulating the values of the humanities. Hughes’ *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1859) provides an exemplary Victorian account of the qualities of an Oxford education whilst Tartt’s *The Secret History* establishes a contemporary account of an equally exclusive liberal education. There are a number of similarities between the novels; they present closed-off worlds nostalgic for a bygone era and explore educational spaces in which young people learn more about living a valuable life than attaining any measurable qualification.

3.1 The Qualities of an Education in *Tom Brown at Oxford*

Tom Brown at Oxford, a less well-known sequel to *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857), was first serialised in *Macmillan Magazine* in 1859. It provides a nostalgic account of the experiences of the protagonist, Tom Brown, during his time as an undergraduate at the University of Oxford. The setting of Oxford is significant for the author Thomas Hughes, who, as his father before him, attended Oriel College 1842-45. The novel is set in the 1840s when Hughes was a student and there are semi-autobiographical connections between the author and the young protagonist. *Tom Brown at Oxford*

describes the city of Oxford in idyllic terms; Tom recounts how “the first few days I was delighted with going about and seeing the buildings, and finding out who had lived in each of the old colleges, and pottering about in the Bodleian, and fancying I should like to be a great scholar” (284). The architecture contributes to the academic experience of an Oxford education. Tom’s close friend Hardy describes a panorama of the city in similar terms: “the spires and towers [...] and the river in the foreground. Look at that shadow of a cloud skimming over Christchurch Meadow. It’s a splendid old place after all” (*Tom Brown at Oxford* 468). These expressions of the picturesque fuel the idea of Oxford as an exclusive world. The implication of exclusion from Oxford is explored through architectural metaphor in *Jude the Obscure*, which will be discussed at length below (see section 5.1).

Oxford, “that sweet city with her dreaming spires” (Arnold “Thyrsis” 19), is frequently used as a physical representation of scholarship and the power of learning in academic fictions.²⁰ John Dougill’s *Oxford in English Literature* (1998) examines the ways in which the city has been represented in literature. He explains how “for over six hundred years the portrayal of Oxford in poetry and prose has made the city as much of a fiction as an actuality, a representation as well as a reality” (1). Oxford is arguably the most popular setting for fictions that involve a university. Ian Carter’s account of campus fiction in *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* (1990) places the number of post-war ‘Oxford novels’ at over one hundred, which Dougill calculates to be at least “three a year” (86). Brian Harrison observes that “16 of the university novels published between 1945 and 1988 were set in Cambridge, though Oxford boasts 119” (1328). In general, fictional representations of the University of Oxford are kinder than those of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge is perhaps most

²⁰ For more popular examples see Pullman, P. *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995-2000) and Dexter, C. *Inspector Morse* (1975-99), which was also the basis for a long running TV show (1987-2000).

famously fictionalised in the political infighting of C. P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951) and Tom Sharpe's *Porterhouse Blue* (1974). Oxford is afforded more idealistic visions, such as Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911); references in the poetry of Matthew Arnold, such as "Scholar Gipsy" (1853) and "Thrysis" (1865); and the fictional Christminster in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1894).

In *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815-1914* (2010) William Lubenow describes how "nineteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge were symbolically significant because they were sites in which liberal values were publically represented" (29). Hughes' novels about archetypal schoolboy Tom Brown present a clear vision of such a liberal education. Throughout *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *Tom Brown at Oxford*, precise knowledge is secondary to civilising and social forces an education provides. A direct appeal to the reader illustrates this textual ambition: "Reader! Had you not ever a friend a few years older than yourself, whose good opinions you were anxious to keep? A fellow *teres atqua rotundus* [complete in himself]; who could do everything better than you, from Plato and tennis down to singing a comic song and playing quoits?" (269). The description of the senior student, Saunders, as a *teres atqua rotundus* draws attention to the result of liberal education creating a well-rounded individual. The wide-ranging admiration from Greek philosophy to garden games draws attention to the broad pool of references which Oxford provided its graduates with. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* similarly suggests that *who* education teaches you to become is more important than *what* you learn. This generalist approach is exemplified in the attitude of Tom's father, Squire. When Tom is sent to Rugby for the first time, Squire states that "I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma [...] what is he sent to school for? Well, partly because he wanted so to go. If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful,

truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want" (*Tom Brown's Schooldays* 63). The *qualities* of an education are the benefit as opposed to the acquisition of academic knowledge. Squire is unconcerned with discrete units of information, of "particles", but instead in the process of self-development that an education encourages. These qualities of bravery, honesty and willingness are the aspirations that Tom's father has for his son in the system of education. In *Tom Brown At Oxford*, Hughes informs the reader that "the body of fellows of St. Ambrose was as distinguished for learning, morality, and respectability as any in the University" (246). Throughout the novel, Tom upholds a belief in the values such as "universal education" (604), "democracy" (672). The focus in both primary and higher education is for the cultivation of a type of person, rather than the attainment of specific knowledges.

Such aspirations and beliefs should not be considered at the level of the individual development alone or without an acknowledgement of nostalgia. In *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (1991) Regenia Gagnier documents how young boys "were extruded from their homes at the age of eight for all-male prep schools that funnelled them into public schools and the socialized and oedipal transferences of power. They learned in school to be boys without women, then to be masters of other boys, and then to be the guardians of state and empire" (178). Considered at this scale, both Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *Tom Brown at Oxford* contribute to the creation of nostalgia for a system that was exclusive and first and foremost served the needs of the nation rather than the individual. Gagnier points to Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's study *The Public School Phenomenon* (1977) as further evidence that "segregation into a one-sexed environment is the single most important social factor distinguishing the British

upper classes from the lower” (Gagnier 186) in addition to “distinguishing Britain’s *national* male-bonding for power, or homosociality, from that of other Western societies” (186). Such considerations of gender and class trouble the vision of a liberal education that Hughes presents. *Tom Brown at Oxford* may well represent an expression of non-instrumental learning and the pursuit of an “age of peace and good will which men had dreamt of in all times” (672), but the delineation of men alone, and not even *all* men, should be clearly noted.

The context in which Hughes imagines the benefits of liberal education is very different to the current state of higher education in England. At a national level, a specialised education has surpassed the ambition for a general one. Today, the government and multinational companies recruit undergraduates into areas of skills shortages.²¹ As described in chapter one, the *Browne Report* (2010) explicitly identified that clinical and STEM subjects as priorities for funding and student support. Within this system of valuation, an emphasis is placed on the wellbeing of society, especially through a focus on healthcare and infrastructure rather than on the individual learner. Hughes’ aspiration for a “fellow *teres atque rotundus*” (269) is unrecognisable within the demands of the current economic framework. It is no longer a national interest to cultivate liberal subjects, but rather precisely skilled workers.

Although the prevalence of the market and present-day demands for specialism are largely absent in Hughes’ novel, there are a few inferences towards an encroachment of economic motivations in *Tom Brown at Oxford*. The most significance observation is made towards the end of the novel when Tom laments the seeping of outside influences into his liberal education:

21 For policy examples see Confederation of British Industry’s (2012); City & Guilds (2008); Mourshed et al. (2012); UKCES (2014).

while one was an undergraduate, one could feel virtuous and indignant at the vices of Oxford, at least at those which one did not indulge in, particularly at the flunkeyism and money-worship which are our most prevalent and disgraceful sins. But when one is a fellow it is quite another affair. They become a sore burthen then, enough to break one's heart. (709)

Even in a nostalgic novel set in the 1840s (before any substantial educational reforms concerning economisation) there is “money worship” (709) at work. Despite the aspiration of Hughes' protagonist towards an education without specific application, the menace of professionalisation exists even within the nostalgic *Tom Brown at Oxford*. Flunkeyism — the pursuit of menial tasks — stands in as the antithesis to Hughes' generalist model of education.

In *Not for Profit* (2010), Nussbaum insists that it is imperative that students are offered a liberal education. This includes learning “how to inquire, and what questions to ask” (92). She reasons that “colleges cannot convey the type of learning that produces global citizens unless they have a liberal arts structure: that is a set of general education courses for all students outside of the requirements of the major subject” (93). Nussbaum argues that the humanities form a fundamental part of the necessary qualities of a liberal education. She upholds that the quality of studying “The Greats” offers a space away from specific application or utility in which to think about wider democratic concerns. While it is possible to learn factual knowledge elsewhere, “the ability to assess historical evidence, to use and think critically about economic principles, to assess accounts of social justice, to speak a foreign language” (93) should be the responsibility of a university education. These qualities

align with the aspiration that Squire has for Tom's future: "if he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman" (*Tom Brown's School Days* 63). The aspiration towards a rounded education that aspires to teach students how to be citizens in the world is threatened in the contemporary system of education, which to encourages the acquisition of skills only in areas of shortage and in subjects that directly contribute to the economic wellbeing of the country. Such processes of specialisation are designed to attend to skills shortages, which undermine the importance of a general education.

Writing in 2013, Nel Noddings argued that educators need "to integrate important work from the liberal arts into every subject and track of the curriculum" (81) in order to preserve these general qualities of an education. Noddings cites Ernest Boyer's definition of integration as a way of "making connections across disciplines, placing the specialities in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating non-specialists, too. In calling for a scholarship of integration, we do not suggest returning to the 'gentleman scholar' of an earlier time, nor do we have in mind the dilettante" (81). That figures such as the "gentleman scholar" and "the dilettante" no longer have a secure hold in the contemporary academy is a positive thing. However, Boyer's observation recognises qualities of a liberal education that should not be left behind. Although *Tom Brown at Oxford* is set within a privileged world, the suggestion that the experience or *quality* of education is just as (if not more) important as the subject matter acquired, is a lesson to be taken from the text today. John Guillory observes that

if the liberal arts curriculum still survives as the preferred course of study in some elite institutions, this fact has everything to do with the class constituency

of these institutions. With few exceptions, it is only those students who belong to the financially secure upper-classes who do not feel compelled to acquire professional or technical knowledge as undergraduates. (*Cultural Capital* 46)

This exclusivity is frequently portrayed in academic fictions, especially in regard to the study of Classics that both Hughes' *Tom Brown at Oxford* and Tartt's *The Secret History* reference. However, Hughes' message of an education that encourages the development of liberal values beyond any particular application is important to consider. Although Latin instruction is currently beyond the remit of most state schooling, we should be cautious of the idea that education not immediately applicable to the marketplace should automatically be assumed to be elitist. Guillory states that this devaluation is the result of neoliberal government. "The perceived devaluation of the humanities curriculum is in reality a decline in its *market* value" (46). Given the current economic austerity, it is hard to recognise the value of the long-term development of character that the Tom Brown novels exemplify and celebrate. Before turning to *The Secret History*, it is also important to note that Hughes' vision of education is problematic in the omission of women, international students, and large sections of the working class. Although it is unfair to apply contemporary beliefs to the past, that Hughes' moral education is exclusively male and set in an environment open only to a privileged few renders it a poor tool for addressing the present. However, I maintain that although more students are now able to access higher education in England, it need not correspond that "flunkeyism" (709) should be the adopted as the model for universities to follow. As Noddings argues, there are values in a liberal education that are yet worth fighting to preserve.

3.2 *The Secret History*: A Classical Education Out of Time

Tom Brown at Oxford focuses on the cultivation of a well-rounded individual able to apply himself (albeit not *herself*) towards some specific cultivation within civil society. *The Secret History* works in reverse, suggesting that an obsessive understanding of a particular subject — Greek — can act as the basis for understanding the wider world. Tartt's approach to representing education in this way is arguably further removed from utility, as the influences of national subject forming practices in the all-boys-club mentality of Oxford are replaced with an aesthetic appreciation of classical texts.

The novel follows a clique of students enrolled in Professor Julian Morrow's Greek class. The action of the novel is shaped by Morrow's pedagogical and personal influence. In justifying his teaching methods, Morrow explains his belief that "having a great diversity of teachers is harmful and confusing for a young mind, in the same way, I believe it is better to know one book intimately than a hundred superficially" (32). This statement is not backed up with reference to contemporary pedagogic justification, but by Greek history: "I know the modern world tends not to agree with me, but after all, Plato had only one teacher and Alexander" (32). This example represents Morrow's belief that an education in the humanities is rooted in an understanding of the classical mind. Beyond the subject matter, the style of tuition and the modes of thinking are also modelled on antiquity. Morrow makes it clear that "diversity" (32) and superficiality are the results of "the modern world" and its neglect of scholastic traditions. Whilst the vision of liberal education in *Tom Brown at Oxford* is generalised and concerned with civilising through homosocial bonding, the world of *The Secret History* is tied intimately to a precise understanding and re-enactment of the philosophy of the classical world. In "Failures in Classical and Modern

Morality: Echoes of Euripides in *The Secret History*" (1996) Barbara Melvin observes that "the idea of one teacher is unthinkable in academia today, but in classical Greece was the norm" (53). The connection between Greek myth and the approach to teaching is one of intimacy in *The Secret History*. Tartt builds an imaginative space in which the reader experiences a singular teacher. The subject matter taught in the classroom is fused with the present lives and activities of the students outside of it.²² Hellenistic, Aristotelian, and Dionysian ideas in class, as well as in the lives of the central characters, are brought to bear on the social life and ideas of the novels central characters. It would be more accurate to say that Morrow's students *live* Greek philosophy as opposed to *study* it.

Through embracing Greek philosophy in the action of the novel, *The Secret History* offers a developed representation of education as a lived experience. A large proportion of the text is spent in the classroom and in the company of the novel's professor. Conventionally in student-centred texts, time spent in the classroom is minimal, while the majority of the action occurs in domestic and social spaces. *The Secret History* offers the reader unusual access to an exclusive and romantic vision of teaching in the bohemian office of a selective Professor. Morrow has a "theory that pupils learned better in a pleasant, non-scholastic atmosphere [...] some sort of Platonic microcosm of what he thought a schoolroom should be" (34). The fictional location of a small liberal arts college in America is the most natural home for this kind of education in fiction, and quite probably in the real world. A recent example of Professor Ricardo Dominguez's teaching at the University of California, San Diego suggests that there may still be space for non-conventional educative experiences within larger institutions. Dominguez requests that his students attend one session

²² Tartt's novel takes its very name from a Greek text authored by Procopius of Caesarea (550-558? CE).

of his course naked. The syllabus outlines that students are invited to “create a gesture that traces, outlines or speaks about your ‘erotic self’” (“Visual Arts 104A: Performing for the Self”). Several newspapers allege that students perform naked by candlelight, with the Professor also being nude.²³ This is evidence of how some scholars continue to reject a corporate approach in a belief that their subject matter requires an alternative approach.

Education is presented as a heightened form of living in *The Secret History*. Throughout, the teachings of the ancient world are applied to the lives of the students in Morrow’s class. Tracy Hargreaves argues that this enables an understanding of “an important aspect of this novel [...] to do with human limitation, and the ability, as Julian had told them, to ever really know one another, or indeed, ourselves” (63). The ancient world, full of passion and meaning, is a more attractive alternative to the facile present day. Through the eyes of the narrator, Richard Papen, the reader glimpses the substitute to the student experience of “drive-in movies and Mexican food, going to Tracy’s apartment for Margaritas and MTV” (429). The education afforded to other undergraduates at Hampden, such as Judy Poovey and Cloke Rayburn, leaves them with “bored smiles and sleepy eyes and cigarettes” (71). The passive and consumerist lifestyles represented by the students within *The Secret History* suggest that the experience of those studying the Classics is an anomaly across the campus. Morrow’s mantra “*what is unthinkable is undoable*” (311 italics original) encourages the consideration of all possibilities. This pursuit of the sublime ends badly, with murder, gunshot wounds, and suicide. The vital enactment of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* and statements about “human limitation” (63) are made to be increasingly morally dubious when implicated in a

²³ For example, see Allen, N. (11 May 2015) “Students asked to sit final university exam in nude with naked professor”; CNN (11 May 2015); CBS Local (11 May 2015).

crime and yet by the end of the novel, Tartt celebrates the pursuit of knowledge in place of the alternative model of education.

The intense experience of education offered by Tartt's novel is an unorthodox representation of the humanities. Although the novel reaches frenzy and murder, the presiding impression of the humanities students, and the Morrow himself, is of coldness. In the opening chapter, the student narrator Papen admires the Greek students from afar. He describes how they "shared a certain coolness, a cruel, mannered charm which was not modern in the least but had a strange cold breath of the ancient world; they were magnificent creatures, *sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora fere bat*, [such eyes, such hands, such looks]" (32). Detachment enables Morrow to conduct his Greek class in a free and unrestricted fashion. Beyond the designation that Hampden is "highly selective" (10), the reader learns that the students in Morrow's class are of a "very limited number" (13) and have "virtually no contact with the rest of the division" (13). As a result, the six Greek students establish an insular community of peers outside the college experience of other undergraduates at the time. As with the closeted world of Oxford in *Tom Brown*, exclusivity and detachment are the presiding impressions of a liberal education in *The Secret History*.

Throughout this novel, the study of classical civilisation equates to a deeper understanding of beauty, of art, and of eloquence. Coldness is also important, an attribute akin to Kant's notion of disinterestedness in the understanding of beauty.²⁴ Julian Morrow is detached from the students who adore him, vanishing entirely at the end of the novel without explanation. *The Secret History* hints that a fictional George Orwell, "a keen observer of the glitter of constructed facades" (576-7) once described Morrow as giving off an "impression that he is a man of extraordinary

²⁴ See comment on disinterestedness and beauty in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) §5 41.

sympathy and warmth. But what you call his 'Asiatic serenity' is, I think, a mask for great coldness" (577). By the end of the novel, Papen is aware of this "distinct coldness of manner" (573) of his teacher. When his students come to him with their confession, Papen describes regarding Morrow "for the first time as he really was: not the benign old sage, the indulgent and protective good-parent of my dreams, but ambiguous, a moral neutral, whose beguiling trappings concealed a being watchful, capricious and heartless" (574). Morrow is represented through the eyes of a student who idolises him; Papen admits that, "it has always been hard for me to talk about Julian without romanticising him" (575). Although Morrow is surpassed, it is because ultimately, "there comes a time when we have to transcend our teachers" (586) and the reader is reminded that although "remote and often cruel" his students "loved him, in spite of, because" (578) of his detachment. *The Secret History* is a novel in which the reader is permitted to enter, along with Papen, into a closed-off world. The atmosphere is something typically inaccessible to most would-be students from the narrator's blue-collar background.

Similarly to Hughes' novel, the fictional campus resembles Tartt's alma mater: Bennington College, Vermont.²⁵ The real present-day mission statement of the college reads: "to place students at the helm of their own education; to guide them in the direction of their greatest potential; and to enlarge, deepen, and transform their lives" ("History and Vision"). Papen describes his college as: "co-ed. Progressive. Specializing in the liberal arts. Highly selective". This Gradgrindian description of the college is enhanced by the following quotation from the fictional Hampden marketing brochure:

²⁵ Her classmates included novelists Bret Easton Ellis and Jill Eisenstadt.

Hampden, in providing a well-rounded course of study in the Humanities, seeks not only to give students a rigorous background in the chosen field but insight into all the disciplines of Western art, civilization, and thought. In doing so, we hope to provide the individual not only with facts, but with the raw material of wisdom. (Tartt 10)

This description of a liberal education is reminiscent of Tom Brown's environment and educational aspirations. Note, however, the decided promise that there will be "facts" in addition to the ambitious attainment of the "raw material of wisdom" (10). In the marketing of Hampden, the need for tangible and measurable forms of knowledge is assured.

As with *Tom Brown at Oxford*, location plays an important role in *The Secret History*. The setting is not only necessary to the plot (getting away with murder requires seclusion) but is additionally significant in the presentation of the experience of a liberal education. Vermont State consists of 75% woodland; in the novel, the density of forested area adds to the sense of being cut-off from the outside world. That the climax of the novel (the murder of Bunny Corcoran) takes place out in the dense and secluded forest is testament to the isolation of the college. Papen describes the woods as "deathly still", "forbidding" and "green and black and stagnant, dark with the smells of mud and rot" (298). Fellow student Henry Winter's assessment of locale speaks volumes: "Vermont. It's a primitive place. People die violent natural deaths all the time" (190). Violence and nature combine to evoke a sublime quality in the forest that surrounds the campus. Isolation from societal norms is an essential component in the student's descent into Dionysian chaos. The remote

locations: the campus itself, Francis' aunt's country estate, the woods, enable the novel to reach frenetic heights.

Although located in an American liberal arts college in Vermont, I argue that Tartt's novel can develop an understanding of representations of the humanities within England. *The Secret History* makes continual reference to English literary life. The American students imitate English literary circles during the early-twentieth century. The reader learns that Morrow was rumoured to have been "a great intellectual in the forties, and a friend to Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot" (16). Eliot and Pound's émigré status is well known, both denouncing their American roots in favour of the literary life abroad.²⁶ In an interview for *Vanity Fair*, September 1992, James Kaplan documents Tartt's "largish obsession, bordering on the cultic, with T.S. Eliot" (250). Further connections to modernist and inter-war literary culture in Britain are found throughout the novel, as Michiko Kakutani observes, the main characters

have less in common with most of their contemporaries than with the bright young things of England immortalized by Waugh and Nancy Mitford: the wilful aesthetes, dedicated to the ideals of beauty and art, who flocked around Harold Acton and Brian Howard at Oxford in the 1920s. (18)

The students within the novel are out of time and place, in their academic fascination with the classical world and its rules concerning morality and justice, their aesthetical views of fashion and society, and their day-to-day activities and mannerisms.

Winter, Abernathy, the Macaulay Twins, and Bunny are reflections of the Bright Young Things. Specific examples of this connection are found in the description of

²⁶ Francois Pauw (1994) notes how the name of "Edmund 'Bunny' Corcoran recalls that of Edmund 'Bunny' Wilson, whose *Axel's Castle* contains one of the definitive critical appraisals of Eliot" (142).

the students' dress. For example, Francis Abernathy dresses "like Alfred Douglas" wearing "magnificent neckties; a black greatcoat that billowed behind him as he walked" (18). Charles and Camilla Macaulay are introduced as "long-dead celebrants from some forgotten garden party" (18) and Harry Winter who "wore dark English suits and carried an umbrella (a bizarre sight in Hampden)" (17) presents a vision of Britishness out of place. Before Richard Papen — an outsider student-protagonist — becomes more intricately involved and drawn into the lives of these strange students, he makes an astute observation that "they suggested a variety of picturesque and fictive qualities" (17). The characters breathe life into a dead subject, but also, into a dying form of education.

Finally, it is worthwhile to note that *The Secret History* is located within the context of philosophical and literary culture. Reference, imitation, and allusion are rife: including namedropping T. S. Eliot, echoes of Fitzgerald, to direct citation of Nietzschean morality.²⁷ *The Secret History* relishes the use of literature and, much like Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (see section 5.3) is able to capture and realise abstract philosophies in a web of reference and parody. Tartt's novel draws the reader into a world of "knowing", where Morrow, alongside the author, demonstrates a "strange gift of twisting feelings of inferiority into superiority and arrogance" (576). As with the experience of "The Waste Land" (1922), the reader might be unaware of the sources, or the logic of each philosophical mode, but is nonetheless caught up in their effect, in the process of literary experience. As T.S. Eliot outlined in "*Ulysses, Order and Myth*" (1923) this "technique characteristic of heavy mythological, historical, and literary allusions", is used to create a "continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" (177). *The Secret History* attempts to make sense of

²⁷ Regarding Fitzgerald in particular, the narrative tone is similar to *The Great Gatsby* (1925), but also, in relation to the character, see Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise* (1920).

the modern world through historical and mythical imagery. Tartt explores the physical manifestation of Eliot's ideas in *The Secret History* as classical lessons come to influence the behaviour and practices of the characters. In *The Secret History*, the ancient world and its scholarship determines the lives of the students.

3.3 Assessing the Value of the Humanities in Novels that Engage with Educational Principles From the Past

Ultimately, the students of Morrow's class learn that the past can be as significant and vibrant as their reality. Unlike the vague notion of university education in *Tom Brown at Oxford*, Tartt's novel presents an intense experience of studying the humanities. *Tom Brown at Oxford* is a novel that reinforces the status quo of higher education through nostalgia. The view of education it represents concerns the cultivation of a citizenry, which has the potential to be configured as an antidote to the repeated language of specialisation and skills in contemporary policymaking. Nussbaum's claim that "education [produces] democratic citizenship" (*Not For Profit* 17) is found in Hughes' representation of a liberal education at Oxford in the nineteenth century. However, the lacking interrogation of elitism, implicit nationalism, and gender inequality in *Tom Brown at Oxford* means that in this sense, it is a problematic tool for articulating the value of the humanities. The following fictional examples in the second and third investigations fail again, but fail better.

The Secret History does not promote nationalism or misogyny, but does little to counter the persistent idea of elitism in education. However, it does offer a critical position against mainstream American College culture and Morrow's handpicked group of Classics students create a scholarly space beyond the reach of external pressures of marketisation. Tartt's novel argues that studying antiquity creates a temporal escape from the encroachment of postmodern scepticism, American

capitalism, and wider popular culture. Her frequent use of values from antiquity and twentieth-century literary theory creates an enticing, albeit dangerous, alternative educational space. *The Secret History* conveys how scholarship can be animate and captivating.

Tom Brown at Oxford and *The Secret History* are nostalgic for the power of knowledge in the past. In the final pages of the novel, Papen recalls a section of the *Iliad*, where Patroklos appears to Achilles in a dream: “Achilles overjoyed at the sight of the apparition – tries to throw his arms around the ghost of his friend, and it vanishes” (627). In a moment, the past is rendered painfully immaterial. Mirroring Achilles, the fate of the students is that, ultimately, their fantasy cannot be maintained. Papen offers a final piece of wisdom from Julian: “*the dead appear to us in dreams [...] because that’s the only way they can make us see them; what we see is only a projection, beamed from a great distance, light shining at us from a dead star*” (627 italics original). I argue that Tarrt’s use of history is much the same; throughout the novel the power of Greek philosophy is, at times, invincible. However, like a dream, the characters cannot avoid the consequences of the present. The illusory experience of the novel must come to an end and the reader, alongside Papen, must face up to the present. The next section explores novels which represent scholarship as a processual experience rather than as a life-philosophy. In doing so, I locate a representation of the humanities that is not, inevitably, a “*dead star*” (627) and instead presents the process of humanities research as an active experience. Therefore, in moving away from a valuation of the humanities as nostalgia for a bygone era, such literature provides a more vibrant form of resistance.

4.0 Investigation Two: Representing the Processes of Humanities Research

The above discussion concerning the qualities of a liberal education explored the student-facing relationships to the humanities. This section turns to representations of the process of writing and the embodiment of scholarly knowledge. *Middlemarch* (1871) and *Possession* (1990) are both novels that represent the everyday processes of undertaking scholarship: the *work* of the humanities. They also each explore the relationship between academic knowledge and fiction, despite being published over a century apart. Within these texts, scholarship is revealed to be more than “plodding application, rows of note-books, and small taper of learned theory exploring the tossed ruins of the world” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 83); both novels explore passion, the power of the imagination, and the real-world implications of intellectual pursuit. In “The Novel Amid Other Discourses” (2011) Patricia Waugh argues that the novel “offers a space between the rock of analytical and positivist epistemologies and the (soft) hard place of Nietzschean (and later postmodern scepticism)” (662). Despite the anti-positivism of humanities research, Waugh argues that novels “have the capacity to build worlds that enable their readers to experience the reality of scholastic, or an enchanted or forgotten sphere of life” (665). As a result, this section explores what Waugh describes as the novel’s “unique ways of knowing” (662). The space of the novel-form makes room for an enquiry into value that has hitherto been missing from the contemporary valuation of the humanities. In this investigation, I consider how the novel offers “a morally committed enquiry [which is] impossible within academic disciplinary regimes of pure and disinterested research” (662). Although Eliot and Byatt reveal different

dimensions of a life spent in the humanities, when read together, they establish an articulation of the practices of scholarly study and an applied example of novels as tools for knowing.

4.1 *Middlemarch* and the Pursuit of *The Key to All Mythologies*

Virginia Woolf famously pronounced *Middlemarch* to be “one of the few English novels written for grown-up people” (“George Eliot”). Karen Chase suggests the novel “withstands the pressures of time, circumstance and personality” (3). Robert McCrum describes it as a “cathedral of words [that] stands today as perhaps the greatest of the great Victorian fictions” (*The Guardian*). As well as being an exemplary Victorian novel in general, *Middlemarch* is recognised as a “supreme academic fiction” (Showalter 7). Whilst the novel is a predecessor to the modern canon of academic fiction, it renders vividly the scholarly work of the humanities. The Reverend Edward Casaubon, a scholar of antiquity, represents a model of scholarship that is arcane and, by Eliot’s harsh presentation, devoid of value. As a clergyman based outside of the university, or any other formal educational environment, Casaubon’s is a somewhat unconventional portrait of a humanities scholar. However, such a relationship between scholarly work and religion is commonly represented in fiction throughout the mid-late Victorian period, such as Mr Francis Arabin in *Barchester Towers* (1857) or Richard Phillotson in *Jude the Obscure* (1894). The link between the clergy and scholarly learning in fiction reflects

reality. John Henry Cardinal Newman is the most famous example, with his lectures on the higher education being published as *The Idea of the University* (1852).²⁸

Elizabeth Hale argues that in *Middlemarch*, Eliot “advocates for the novel as a key medium of serious, intelligent and valuable thought, in part through the representation of destructive modes of thinking” (“Sickly Scholars and Healthy Novels” 242). It is clear that Casaubon is a representation of this destructive mode. Casaubon’s life is a moral lesson for the humanities: the danger of “liv[ing] too much with the dead” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 18). Showalter cites Casaubon as “the most haunting spectre of the academic as grim pedagogue, the scholar as the spirit of all that is sterile, cold and dark” (7). Quite unlike the allure of the cool disinterestedness of Professor Morrow in *The Secret History*, Casaubon is a troubling ghost to provoke disquietude in all humanities scholars. Above and beyond being a dark totem of academic conceit, I argue that the representation of such an unlikeable character opens up a discussion about the potential of the novel form to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. *Middlemarch* as a text itself acts to defy Casaubon’s valuation and uses of knowledge. Casaubon’s unfinished magnum opus, *The Key To All Mythologies*, is an endless task that epitomises the central criticism of scholarly work in *Middlemarch*: that it is self-absorbed and without real-world application. In *The World of Mr Casaubon: Britain’s Wars of Mythography 1700 – 1870* (2016) Colin Kidd describes how “‘The ‘Key to All Mythologies’ has become a byword for the mind-numbingly recondite and is typically thought of as a scene of arid and misguided pedantry” (29). However, unlike the fruitlessness of Casaubon’s work, the form of the novel itself offers an educative experience with an aspiration towards value beyond Eliot’s desire to construct it.

²⁸ Newman was instrumental in the founding the Catholic University of Ireland, which today is University College Dublin.

Against scholarly inertia, Eliot configures *Middlemarch* as a representative space for value, connecting universal qualities of humanistic research and practical processes through the weaving narrative structure of one “particular web” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 140). In “Sickly Scholars and Healthy Novels”, Hale argues that *Middlemarch* demonstrates:

the value of an integrated intellectual approach to life: by revealing the sterile qualities of minds that exist only to feed on their own inner resources, and of scholarship that exists only to destroy, rather than to create. [The] novel form, [...] shows the richness of nineteenth-century fiction’s engagement with intellectual debate, and the power of the novel in nourishing the life of the mind. (242-43)

An “integrated intellectual approach” is what the novel aspires towards, and Casaubon is configured as a counterpoint to the linear thrust of the narrative. Stasis dominates the representation of Casaubon; his very soul is “swampy” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 279). Hale observes that swamplands “are unhealthily liminal: too damp to be fertile ground, too dry to be a river, pool or ocean” (223). In *Middlemarch* water represents the experiences of knowledge. For example, excitement about greater understanding runs through Dorothea Brooke as an “electric stream” (27) when her uncle presents her with pamphlets to read. In naïve admiration of Casaubon’s scholarly knowledge, she remarks: “what a lake compared with my little pool!” (25). Other academic figures in the novel are associated with fish. “Carp”, “Pike”, and “Tench” (281) are introduced as rival scholars, sharing names with freshwater fish known for “inhabiting still and deep waters” (“tench n.1” *OED*

Online).²⁹ The image of staleness recurrently describes Casaubon; his home at Lowick has “an air of autumnal decline” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 73-74) wherein “fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour” (63). As the novel concludes, Eliot describes *The Key to All Mythologies* as a work whose “significance [...] is to vanish as the waters which come and go where no man has need of them” (422). A useless body of water is the resting place of *The Key to All Mythologies*, approaching death his longings “clung low and mist-like in very shady places” (424).

The very first mention of water in *Middlemarch* occurs in the prelude, in reference to a “brown pond” (4). Again, the imagery of a restricted body of water resonates with Casaubon’s scholarly stagnation. Eliot offers this tragic image of scholarly limitation: “here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind” (4). This cygnet surely is Dorothea, one of the many St. Theresas who has “found for themselves no epic life” (3), and are destined to live a life of “unhistoric acts” and “rest in unvisited tombs” (830). Eliot’s reference to the “living stream” (4), beyond, gestures to something that *Middlemarch* as a knowing novel attempts to capture. It is true that this noble attempt is expressed as striving rather than as attainment. Just as Dorothea (and the cygnet) never reach the “living stream” (4), so the narrator struggles towards, but perhaps never quite reaches, capturing “the roar which lies on the other side of silence” (194).

For Casaubon, the process of scholarship is futile. Eliot presents a negative portrait of a life spent “toiling in the morass of authorship without seeing nearer to the goal” (85) resulting in the “lifeless embalment of knowledge” (196). *The Key to All Mythologies* will never be published and the knowledge is out of touch with

²⁹ For an extensive reading of fish imagery in *Middlemarch* see Kidd (2016) 176-99.

contemporary work on the Continent. Will Ladislaw remarks cruelly to Dorothea that Casaubon's book is outmoded as "new discoveries are constantly making new points of view" (222) and makes significant omissions because of "the necessity of knowing German" (221) in order to keep abreast of the contemporary developments in the field. Irrelevance is made manifest in both Casaubon's physical body and the spaces he occupies in the novel. He has a spectral persona: "[Casaubon's] mind is something like a ghost of an ancient, wandering around the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes" (18). The association between scholarship and death is recurrent. Even in the opening romance of the novel, when Dorothea regards Casaubon as an oracle, he is associated with static and dark spaces. Her admiration is described in the lexicon of museology: "everything he said seemed like a specimen from a mine, or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages" (32-3). The recurrent links to Casaubon and antiquity shift from these arguably positive enshrinements to more negative representations throughout the novel. As Casaubon approaches death, Dorothea imagines the task of sorting through *The Key to All Mythologies*:

she pictured to herself the days, and months, and years which she must spend sorting what might be called shattered mummies, fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins – sorting them as food for a theory which was already withered in the birth like an elfin child. (478)

The images of a ruined museum vividly evoke the withdrawal of Dorothea's admiration for Casaubon and his knowledge. All that remains are "shattered

mummies” and “crushed ruins” (478), in contrast to the former “attractively labyrinthine” (24) qualities of his mind. The principal problem with Casaubon is his connection to the past as opposed to the present. He admits, “I live too much with the dead” (18) in the opening pages of the novel. How are we to construct a value for the humanities scholar in this narrative of Dorothea’s naïve hope turning to bitter disillusionment? David Daiches asserts that “it is not lack of theological credulity, but lack of intellectual and imaginative power above all, certain defects of *character*, which render Casaubon’s research abortive” (18). The image of the “elfin child” (*Middlemarch* 478) is perhaps the darkest metaphor for the inaction of scholarly enquiry.

In the *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 February 1974, Richard Ellmann describes how Eliot uses the figure of Casaubon to represent bad scholarship. He writes: “Casaubonism is the entombing of the senses in the mind’s cellarage” (“Dorothea’s Husbands” 166). In the novel, James Chettam explicitly wonders “does he [Casaubon] even have a heart?” (*Middlemarch* 69), and Mrs Cadwallader’s response, “not the melting sort” (69), represents the rigidity of mind that limits Casaubon in both love and learning. It is Chettam’s question that is answered again, ironically, in Casaubon’s death. His heart is the very organ that fails him; as the site of his major attack the library becomes his deathbed and his sedentary scholarly life causes the “fatty degeneration of the heart” (423). A careful reader observes that when Tertius Lydgate informs Casaubon that the disease is fatal, the doctor feels “a little amusement mingling with his pity” (423). Here, Eliot also is laughing at the pathetic plight as Casaubon faces in realising “the incompleteness of labours, which have extended through all [the] best years” (422) of his life.

Despite this damning presentation, I argue that hope remains for the humanities in *Middlemarch* in the potential of a more imaginative scholar who is able to embrace the continual progression of a field of humanistic knowledge. Most importantly, unlike *The Key to All Mythologies*, *Middlemarch* reaches publication. In this sense, Eliot succeeds in passing her literary knowledge and articulation of the values of a liberal education into the world. Hale argues that Eliot's novel "vastly supersede the abilities of Casaubon" (242). The formal quality of *Middlemarch*, such as the scope and scale of the narrative, is testament to "the novel's vitality as a new mode of thinking, a new mode of intellectual being" (242). Whilst Casaubon's approach of engaging with the humanities is flawed, the *desire to know* is not dismissed in the same way. A respect for the ability for language to represent life, and the pursuit of an education that is morally virtuous and for the greater good is championed. Dorothea's initial admiration of Casaubon's academic work is revealed to be naïve, and *Middlemarch* is a novel, in part, about the failure of their marriage her disappointment in the realities of Casaubon's work. Despite the presentation of an unlikeable scholar, the novel itself inspires an optimistic attitude towards the pursuit of knowledge.

Carol Christ follows this hopeful reading in "The Victorian University and Our Own" (2008) suggesting that Eliot is "sceptical of such totalising projects that exclude other perspectives upon phenomena; she is at heart a pluralist. [...] She makes knowledge the instrument of personal transformation, an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character" (292). *Middlemarch's* prelude validates Christ's claim, establishing Dorothea as a force of the "indefiniteness" (4) of female potential and of a "passionate [and] ideal nature" (3). In its form and its morality, *Middlemarch* defends the inherent benefits in pursuing knowledge that is connected

to present worldly concerns. Dorothea clearly expresses that “the thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on. Into this soul-hunger as yet all her youthful passion was poured” (29). In this, Eliot captures the value of an enacted liberal education as a process of living. *Middlemarch* supports a liberal education that “educates the intellect, to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it” (125-6). Eliot’s view aligns with John H. Newman’s argument in *The Idea of the University*, which similarly describes that knowledge as “not merely a means to something beyond it, or the preliminary of certain arts into which it naturally resolves, but an end sufficient to rest in and to pursue for its own sake” (Newman 103). In contrast to the stale scholarship of Casaubon, Eliot’s striving to know what is thought to be best remains an essential part of representing the work of the humanities.

4.2 Possession and the Processes of Scholarship

Unlike the oppositional relationship between Eliot’s novel and Casaubon’s scholarly work, *Possession* embeds the processes of humanities scholarship within the narrative structure of the book. The text is a palimpsest of diary entries, letters, Victorian artefacts, narrative, dialogue and poetry. *Possession* inspires through its structural form much in the same way that the process of academic research can be compelling. The plot and structure of the novel are tied up in the “primitive” (258) desire to pursue knowledge. Unlike Casaubon’s stagnant scholarship in *Middlemarch*, Byatt’s presentation of scholarly work is “alive” and “urgent” (56). The plot of the novel is driven by academic enquiry and the reader is co-opted as a fellow

conspirator alongside the academic protagonists. Reading *Possession* is to experience of the mental processes of research, and in providing this imaginative understanding Byatt offers a vital representation of the value of the humanities in and of themselves.

The novel follows the actions of a pair of young academics, Maud Bailey and Roland Mitchell, as they follow a paper trail of archival evidence of the fictional Victorian poets Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. The novel's opening scene portrays a scholarly scandal in the London Library as the desperate Mitchell steals a secret manuscript, unread for many years, which hints towards a hitherto unknown affair between Ash and LaMotte. As the novel progresses, Bailey (a well-known scholar of LaMotte) and Mitchell (a lesser-known Ash scholar) become obsessed with proving a love affair between the two Victorian writers. In the context of the novel, as in real academic life, such a discovery would equate to scholarly acclaim for the finder. As a result, readers of *Possession* experience a pastiche of what can be at stake in the research process.

The pacing of *Possession* is designed to make it a page-turner and the plot, with its reveals and surprises, proves a captivating read. Richard Todd notes that "it is a compelling, addictive read, and the reader submits to it out of passion, along with something one might even term 'virtue'" (44). *Possession* is a novel that invites its reader to take part in the research process, to become immersed in the web of materials, to solve the mystery alongside Bailey and Mitchell. The pleasure of reading *Possession* is an important part of its advocacy for the value of the humanities. Although the subtitle of the novel is "a Romance", *Possession* is a detective novel and a work of historical fiction, as well as a romance quest narrative. Moseley argues that *Possession* is a novel that is "about scholarship — the

discovery of documents, the forming of judgments, the revision of critical understanding” (6). Byatt’s talent in writing a bestseller about two academics is testament to her skills as an author, but perhaps signifies a genuine public interest in the mysterious world of academia and the archive.³⁰ Additionally, *Possession* provides more crime, sex, and exciting locations than is traditionally expected in academic fiction. The novel begins with theft and ends with the illicit exhumation of a grave; the letters of La Motte contain clear erotic charge; and although the landscape of *Possession* is hardly exotic, it is Romantic. Forgotten archives, old country houses, the Yorkshire Moors and a gloomy Sussex graveyard establish an intense setting for this narrative.

The entire plot revolves around the actions of living academics and dead poets. The lives of the Victorian poets become enmeshed with lives of the contemporary scholars Bailey and Mitchell. Invented literary fragments, articles, diary entries and poems make *Possession* an intricate web of history, memoir and literary art. If the past and the present are in conflict in *Middlemarch*, in *Possession* they are intertwined through a passionate affair. Akin to the pluralism of Eliot, Byatt’s novel demonstrates an impressive grasp of many different voices. *Possession* presents the most exciting parts of academic life as relying on a connection to others. At the end of the novel, Bailey would have been unable to solve the mystery without Mitchell’s expertise. Unlike the isolation of Casaubon, destined “to work as in a treadmill fruitlessly” (G. Eliot *Middlemarch* 479), Mitchell and Bailey follow their paper trail on a real-life academic quest. This unconventional approach allows the processes of humanities scholarship to be given free reign in the world, let loose from the confines

³⁰ Jerome de Groot offers further discussion of academia and the heroic quests in reference to *The Da Vinci Code* in *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. 2009, 49-57.

of the campus. Mitchell describes this passion as being “urged on by some violent emotion of curiosity – not greed, curiosity, more fundamental even than sex, the desire for knowledge” (92). To know is perhaps the greatest quest in the romance genre. For example, consider the moment in which Bailey realises her desire to pursue knowledge:

I want to – to – follow the – path. I feel taken over by this. I want to *know* what happened, and I want it to be me that finds out. I thought you were mad, when you came to Lincoln with your stolen letter. Now I feel the same. It isn't professional greed. It's something more primitive. (258)

Bailey and Mitchell are active participants, working together and against others in a dynamic process of discovery and knowledge acquisition. In doing so, *Possession* reminds us how “literary critics make natural detectives” (258).

Bailey, in particular, is a rescued Casaubon, drawn out from the sterile archives into a romantic adventure. The novel permits its protagonists to abandon the guilt of enjoying research and to follow Robert Frost's suggestion of taking the road less travelled. Outside of the formal structures of the university, the novel presents research as a satisfying and exciting ambition, and one “that has made all the difference” (“The Road Not Taken”) in providing a positive representation of the humanities. *Possession* reveals that passion led both Bailey and Mitchell to the humanities in the first instance. Identifying the initial reasons that they became researchers, Bailey explains how Ash's poems “were what stayed alive, when I'd been taught and examined everything else”, Maud smiles and agrees “exactly. That's it. What could survive our education” (62). This is not an aspect of the

humanities that is admitted openly, but is nonetheless a truth that many scholars reflect upon anecdotally. Monica Flegel summarises that Byatt's novel "urge[s] us to leave behind critical readings and embrace reading for enjoyment" (429). The novel valorises a creative approach to scholarship, and in doing so, an affective dimension of humanities scholarship is given life within the space of the novel.

The bodies of the academics themselves come to represent the pursuit of passion and romance. In chasing down the secret affair of the Victorians, Mitchell and Bailey fall into their own academic romance. As the pair consummate their love, the narrative makes a connection between the present and the past: "very slowly and with infinite gentle delays and delicate diversions and variations of indirect assault, Roland finally, to use an outdated phrase, entered and took possession of all of her white coolness" (Byatt 550). Even in this moment of physical intimacy, Byatt's narrative continues to generate a relationship between the present and the past that animates humanistic scholarship. When Mitchell sleeps next to Bailey, he is "a dark comma against her pale elegant phrase" (44): a most embodied representation of the humanities.

4.3: Assessing the Value of the Humanities in Novels that Explore the Process of Writing and Research

Above, I have suggested that the experience of reading particular fictional work offers a reader an experiential understanding of humanities research. Here, I consider how the novel form itself contributes to an understanding of values in the humanities. In "Literature and Life" (1997) Giles Deleuze outlines the following perspective on the relationship between fiction and reality:

literature [...] exists only when it discovers beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal – which is not a generality but a singularity at the highest point: a man, a woman, a beast, a stomach, a child [...] it is not the first two persons that function as the condition for literary enunciation; literature begins only when a third person is born that strips us of the power to say “I”. Of course, literary characters are perfectly individuated and are neither vague nor general, but all their individual traits elevate them to a vision that carries them off in an indefinite, like a becoming that is too powerful for them: Ahab and the vision of Moby Dick. (227)

Deleuze’s statement is applicable to Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, one of the “many Therasas” (3) whose lives were not attributed any value until Eliot assumed the responsibility of representing such endeavours. Throughout *Middlemarch* the narrative explores scalar shifting, from representative to general imagery. This ability for fiction to represent the individual experience as a universal one is valuable in articulating the value of the humanities. In “The Natural History of German Life” (1883) Eliot argues that fictional representations offer “the raw material of moral sentiment” which marks a sharp relief from the languages of “generalizations and statistics” (145). Eliot recognises that “language is an instrument which scarcely anything short of genius can wield with definiteness and certainty” (164) since it provides “anything but a rational state” (164). The irrationalism and imagination of fiction is able to articulate, although not always definitively, the muddled matter of “moral sentiment”. Thinking further along these lines, Eliot imagines the uselessness of a language that:

has no uncertainty [...] — a patent deodorized and non-resonant language, which effects the purpose of communication as perfectly and rapidly as algebraic signs. Your language may be a perfect medium of expression to science, but will never express *life*, which is a great deal more than science. (164-5)

Academic fictions should be recognised for their ability to animate the values of the humanities with a great deal more life than economic policy could ever afford.

Possession is a novel that equally addresses the vitality of knowing. The intertextuality and interconnection characterises the lives of the academic characters, and the nineteenth-century poets, but ultimately, it also represents the plural-character of the humanities. In a vocation that is so often comprised of isolated and individuated scholars, Byatt's presents a vision of academic life that is generated *between* Mitchell and Bailey, in interaction with historical characters and other academic characters, in a method that is "neither vague nor general" (Deleuze 227). The vitality of literary research is what carries Bailey and Mitchell to their eventual discovery in *Possession*. The representation of the value of the humanities is located in the practice of academic research; "possession" is a heightened state of being, as opposed to an object to owned.

5.0 Investigation Three: Pressures of Economics in Education

This section moves on to a discussion of the values of scholarship against economic pressure. In *Imagining the Academy*, Edgerton discusses how her position as a professor provides “a disturbing standpoint from which to observe some of the worst trends in social and cultural change, as well as the best” (1). This section explores how the novel performs a similar function. As this chapter comes to its final literary investigation, the selected texts are drawn back into contact with economic rationalism, the market, and an interrogation of the dominant discourse that shapes the valuation of the humanities within higher education. For this task, I focus on Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1894), Frank Parkin’s *The Mind and Body Shop* (1986) and Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005). Each provides a different representation of the limiting nature of the market in the valuation of higher education.

5.1 *Jude the Obscure* and Barriers to Education

Hardy’s final novel highlights those who are excluded from the luxury of liberal education. *Jude the Obscure* is in many ways an anti-academic fiction, since the protagonist never achieves entry into the scholarly community at Christminster. As with *Middlemarch*, Hardy’s novel is epic in scale. To discuss access to higher education in *Jude the Obscure* is to concentrate on a small fragment of a vast portrait. In doing so, I focus only on the first two parts of the novel “At Marygreen” and “At Christminster” with some reference to Jude’s later life in the sixth part “At Christminster Again”. Albert Guerard suggests that scholars might best tackle the

enormity of the scope of *Jude the Obscure* by dividing it into a “multiplicity of separate and detachable problems” (32). Following this schema, I address one of the seven problems that Guerard identifies, that is, “the socio-economic problems of education opportunity for the poor and of class deracination” (32). The following analysis delivers what the above discussion of *Tom Brown at Oxford* omits, including the representation of the difficulties of access to higher education.

The images of higher education presented in *Jude the Obscure* are economic hardship and class prejudice. In *Tom Brown at Oxford* the closest reference to economic struggle is represented in a character named Hardy, co-incidentally. Hardy is a “servitor”, a position that fellow undergraduate Drysdale cruelly describes as being “something in the upper-servant line [who] does the don’s dirty work, and gets their broken victuals, and I believe he pays no college fees” (292). Hughes’ Hardy works within the college in order to receive tuition and elaborates upon his social standing in a self-contained confessional chapter “Hardy’s History” (311-323). In this section, the reader finds that “with the exception of one of the tutors, and one man who was a freshman with me, [Hardy] does not know a man in college except as a mere speaking acquaintance” (*Tom Brown at Oxford* 318). John Reed documents that “it remained a belief of the Victorians that important class contacts were to be established through public school associations” (63). It is evident that Hardy’s economic class renders him a social pariah even though he is able to gain access to an Oxford education. In contrast, Thomas Hardy’s eponymous character Jude Fawley, is destined to remain on the outside of the educational institution. Jude nurtures his dream to go to the university town of Christminster and find his home amongst scholarly men. Although he succeeds in making the physical pilgrimage to the city he remains socially and economically excluded and is unable to participate in

the intellectual life around him.

Jude exhibits a fascination with the town of Christminster from an early age. He seeks out high vantage points to catch a glimpse of the “city of light” (25) on the horizon. The fictional Christminster is closely modeled on Oxford, which as discussed above in the context of *Tom Brown at Oxford*, allows Hardy to draw upon a rich contextual and symbolic history. Christminster assumes an intellectual and religious aura in Jude’s mind. Philip Hobsbaum observes that the protagonist “wanders about Oxford, but is somehow excluded from it. His longing, however, is almost an aesthetic one – for cloisters and quadrangles, for processions decked out in academic regalia” (23-24). In time, even the physical architecture of Oxford is a restrictive barrier to education: “only a wall – but what a wall!” (102). Despite suffering both social and physical exclusion, Jude remains enraptured: “Beautiful city! So venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene! [...] her ineffable charm keeps ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection” (Hardy 96-97). Jude echoes the sentiments of Oxford as a site of humanistic learning that is at a remove from the pressures of policy, able to approach “the ideal” of a liberal education.

Other townspeople in Marygreen proffer negative attitudes about the city. In a salient episode, an unnamed cart driver warns Jude “you’d have to get your head screwed on t’other way before you could read what they read there” (23). The cart driver describes how “‘em lives on a lofty level; there’s no gainsaying it, though I myself med not think much of ‘em” and explains how “[high] be they in their minds – noble-minded men enough, no doubt – some on ‘em – able to earn hundreds by thinking aloud” (23). He warns Jude that somebody belonging to his socio-economic background would be unsuited to life in Christminster. The inclusion of the carter’s

perspective is unusual in a discussion about higher education but offers valuable insight into how academia can be perceived in the wider world. This is a far more cynical vision than Charles Dickens presents in *Great Expectations* (1860-1), for example, when the blacksmith, Joe Gargery, maintains a belief in the transformative power of education despite struggling to spell his own name.

Within *Jude the Obscure*, Jude's cousin and lover Sue Brideshead encapsulates Jude's difficult economic circumstances by stating that, "you are one of the very men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities or friends" (181). In a vivid image of exclusion, Sue observes how Jude is metaphorically "elbowed off the pavement by millionaire's sons" (181). Hardy's position is unambiguous: access to education is unfair and in need of redress. Noddings describes how *Jude the Obscure* "caused a storm of outrage among some of the highly educated — some of it aroused by the pessimism of the novel, some surely by its depiction of the snobbery and intellectual isolation of academe" (78). This criticism drove many nineteenth-century scholars to defend what they saw as the relative openness of the academy. Since Jude has no access to the professors themselves, it is the physical structures of the university that become caricatured: "some were pompous; some had put on the look of family vaults above ground; something barbaric loomed in the masonries of all" (99). In his manual labouring as a stonemason, Jude builds the very structures of the institutions that deny him access. Bill Jones argues that Jude "works on the fabric of the college buildings, work without which the buildings could not survive, and yet there is no chance for him to gain the inside of these walls" (25). Hardy presents material work and immaterial education as completely distinct but in a relationship that reinforces their separation. Despite this memorable image of

educational injustice, it is significant to notice that throughout the novel Jude continually aspires towards education and remains hopeful for the future. In the penultimate chapter, Jude reflects on the lack of opportunities afforded to him: “I felt as if I could do one thing if I had the opportunity. I could accumulate ideas, and impart them to others. I wonder if the Founders had such as I in their minds – a fellow good for nothing else but that particular thing?” (478). That Jude fails to gain acceptance into Christminster is tragic. He dies with sounds of celebration from the honorary graduation ceremony at Cardinal College floating through his window, a jarring image that challenges readers to consider the exclusion of the working classes from higher education and the lives of those who struggle in obscurity.

The Victorian era was a period of transformation in higher education; Carol Christ provides a concise history of change in “The Victorian University and Our Own” (2008):

In 1836, the King ended the monopoly that Cambridge and Oxford had over the awarding of university degrees by granting a royal charter to the University of London, which had begun offering university-level instruction in 1826. Owens College, Manchester, admitted its first class in 1851; in 1851, John Henry Newman went to Ireland to establish a Roman Catholic university in Dublin. The University of Bristol opened in 1876; Mason College of Science, which became the University of Birmingham, in 1880. University colleges were also founded in Hull, Southampton, Reading, Nottingham, Exeter, and Leicester. Between 1848 and 1871, the first women’s colleges were founded at Oxford and at Cambridge. (287)

Despite improved access to universities being heralded throughout the 1890s, the vision portrayed in *Jude the Obscure*, first published in 1894, demonstrates that these events had not alleviated the socio-economic limitations on university attendance. In 1892, the University of Oxford established the Standing Committee of the Delegacy of Local Examinations, offering a more diverse and accessible adult education programme for the first time. A significant improvement was the foundation of Ruskin College in 1899. This independent educational institution, deliberately located in Oxford, was designed for working-class men to attend university and “educate themselves efficiently at nominal cost” (Edwards 71). In the ‘Postscript’ of the 1912 edition, Hardy notes how he “was informed that some readers thought these episodes an attack on venerable institutions, and that when Ruskin College was subsequently founded it should have been called the College of Jude the Obscure” (“Postscript” to *Jude the Obscure* xv). However, the exclusion of Jude is not exclusively an “attack” (xv) that is devoid of hope. Jude gestures “there are schemes afoot for making University less exclusive, and extending its influence, I don’t know much about it. And it is too late, too late for me! Ah – and for how many worthier ones before me” (479). Education in *Jude the Obscure* remains an unresolved problem for the lower and middle classes. Nevertheless, Hardy’s attempt to engage with educational reform through fiction is testament to the ways in which literature has the potential to alter public opinion, stimulate debate, and instigate social change.

The final two examples in this chapter engage more directly with the present context of neoliberalism within higher education. Frank Parkin’s *The Mind and Body Shop* (1986) and Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005) offer two approaches to addressing the current state of higher education in England through fiction. Each

provides a very different entry point into the debate concerning economics and the humanities. *On Beauty* unabashedly extolls the present-day potential of a liberal education in higher education while Parkin presents a near-future dystopia in which higher education has become commercialised beyond recognition and repair. Where Parkin is brash, Smith is ambiguous. Although each author adopts and explores different approaches, they both offer productive defences of the value of the humanities under economic pressure.

5.2 Frank Parkin's *The Mind and Body Shop: Everything For Sale*

The Mind and Body Shop presents a speculative vision of higher education in a near-future, dystopian England. However, the future that Parkin forecasted in 1986 represents a world very close to reality today. Although *The Mind and Body Shop* is presented as hyperbole, many elements of the novel are recognisable in the commercial spirit of contemporary higher education under neoliberalism in England. As a result, Parkin's critique of the "glass and metal" (191) university offers readers a satirical portrait of a "competitive" (read neoliberal) university.³¹ The novel extends academic frustrations to their most hysterical lengths: a class on Spinoza is taught in a Jacuzzi to make it more popular, the titular Mind and Body Shop refers to a literal store in which the Philosophy department is forced to sell the subject to passers-by on the street. Parkin's novel makes manifest Stefan Collini's vision of "scholars becoming "door-to-door salesmen for vulgarized versions of their increasingly market-oriented products" ("Impact on Humanities" 18). In *The Mind and Body Shop*

³¹ The language of competition is pervasive in many university marketing campaigns. For example the Twitter biography from University College Cork (@UCCResearch) reads as follows: "University College Cork (UCC) is an internationally competitive, research-led University".

the commodification of education is taken to its literal extreme by being located in a retail unit. Parkin uses absurdity as a tool to critique the more incremental changes occurring within higher education during the 1980s. *The Mind and Body Shop* differs from conventional campus fiction, since it ridicules the economic context of higher education as opposed to a specific faculty. The satire is aimed at the level of the institutional system, as opposed to an individual academic life.

Parkin's character of the Vice Chancellor is the most haunting embodiment of neoliberal higher education. He is the mouthpiece of much of the commercial language in the novel, seeking to manage the university in the same style as his previous post at "the East Midlands division of Consolidated Tractor Fuels" (39).³² According to the Vice-Chancellor "anything can be sold if it's properly presented" and each subject is merchandise: "a commodity, just like any other" (12). Political philosopher Michael Sandel observes how "today, almost everything is up for sale" (*What Money Can't Buy* 3). Parkin's vision of the corporate university opens up a debate about how far an education institution might be marketised before it loses sight of its purpose and simply becomes another business. In *The Mind and Body Shop* the Vice Chancellor states that the function of the modern university is "to give customer satisfaction" (38) and reminds the academic staff that "the days of the ivory tower were over long ago" (14). Resembling the fictional Vice-Chancellor of the University of Poppleton from Laurie Taylor's weekly cartoon in the *Times Higher Education* (see figure two), the Vice-Chancellor in Parkin's novel is presented as a ruthless businessman with no regard for knowledge beyond the potentials of economic profit or institutional prestige.

³² However, some academic staff members support the corporate system, such as Hedda Hagstrom who works in Admin I, (see 173) and the unnamed Professor of Fisheries Science, (see 206).

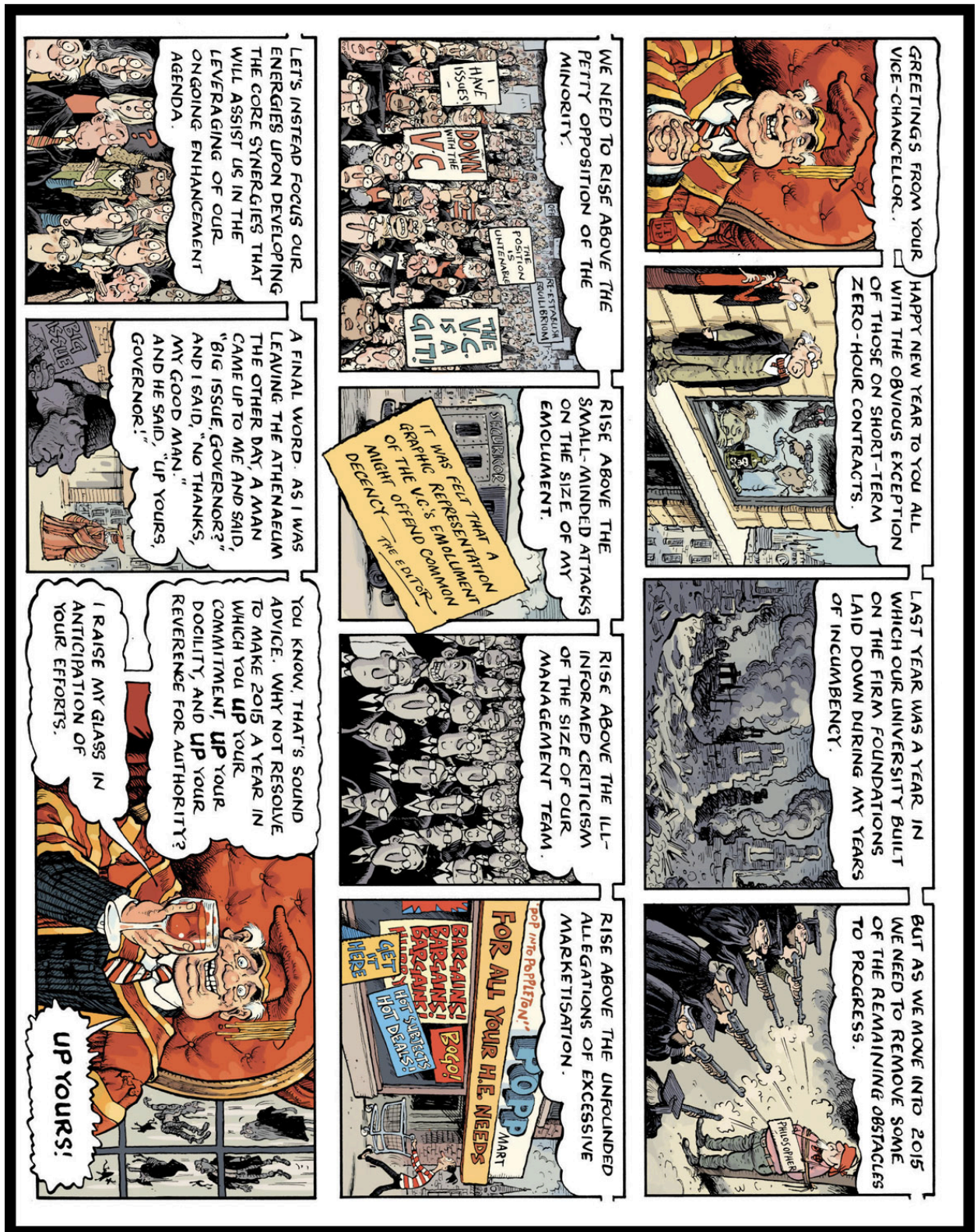


Figure 2: Laurie Taylor "Greetings From Your Vice-Chancellor." *Times Higher Education*, 1 January 2015.

The counterpoint to the damning corporate portrait of the Vice-Chancellor in *The Mind and Body Shop* is the philosophy professor, Douglas Hambro, who represents the last bastion of academic integrity in the novel. Hambro believes in the value of philosophy, beyond its economic potential and persistently. Although timid, he argues that “moral philosophy doesn’t really lend itself to a purely commercial approach” (12). His attempts prove futile and are tinged with a despondency seen in the “depressive disorientation” (64) that Sarah Amsler documents in contemporary debates about the crisis of the humanities in higher education in England.

Throughout the novel, Hambro provides a testimony to the economisation of higher education, which is perhaps best captured in the following descriptive passage:

it seemed relatively few years ago that the university was a comfortable backwater of quiet learning and modest scholarship. He could still vaguely remember it as it had been before privatisation. That was the time when students entered the lecture theatres without passing through coin-operated turnstiles. In those days he was not required to preface his seminar on the Stoics with a message from the commercial sponsors. Nor was he responsible for sweeping up the room afterwards. After all these years he could still not get accustomed to adding the suffix Inc. to the name of the university, nor to renting his office on a monthly tenancy. He could not even look forward to the prospect of his imminent retirement now that the pension had been abolished.

(13)

The scenes detailed by Hambro are simultaneously absurd and conceivable. The novel was reviewed in the *New York Times*, 16 August 1987, as “an uncomfortable madcap vision” (“Free Will Is Our Only Choice”). However, the horror of reading *The Mind and Body Shop* today, three decades on, it is close to being a truth as well as a fiction; in the present state of neoliberal higher education reading the novel becomes less like a satire, and more akin to a bad day at the office. Zero-hours contracts with hot-desking is the equivalent of the “monthly tenancy” that Hambro describes. Corporate sponsorships seep into universities through many unlikely avenues and it is now not unusual to find students receiving an advertisement at the beginning of an academic lecture.³³

In *The Mind and Body Shop*, the effects of market rationale inherent in contemporary higher education are imagined at their radical conclusion. Jonathan Hull observes that Parkin’s novel offers a scenario in which “professors are no longer valued for their knowledge or teaching skill but for their flair for raising money and tailoring research to fit corporate sponsors” (114). Today, funding bodies and large corporations looking to finance universities often focus investment in hard science subjects (STEM) or business-based courses, where the results of study are direct, short-term, and product-based. The idea of impact dominates discussions of value in higher education and it is difficult to imagine how subjects in the humanities can substantiate their worth in these empirical terms. The idea of a philosophy department running a “Lunchtime Special: Schopenhauer in the Shopping Hour” (122) is farcical, as is the presentation of a “matinée performance of Kierkegaard-a-GoGo” (160). Parkin’s novel foregrounds the alternative values that are in decline.

³³ Recent personal experience within my own institution, the University of Exeter, has seen the sponsorship of stair risers within the Student’s Guild for PwC; KPMG as the title sponsor of the University of Exeter Athletic Union; to my horror, I found a classroom in which cans of the energy drink Red Bull had been stuck to the underside of the tables as a promotion.

The failure of Philosophy to become a marketable product is indicative of the unsuitability of evaluating education through market rationality.

In *What Are Universities For?* Collini asserts that “one of the main sources of confusion these days is the misleading analogy between a university and a commercial company” (134) and argues that “if the only justification for spending money is that it contributes to making money” (137) we are clearly missing out on many important human activities. The desperate marketing of the subject of philosophy in *The Mind and Body Shop* raises the value of morality, which *physically* cannot be sold. The novel concludes with a haunting question: “wasn’t it Merleau-Ponty who said that whatever would happen to philosophy today would happen to the world tomorrow?” (220). Whilst the attribution of this quotation is dubious, this enquiry lies at the heart of how *The Mind and Body Shop* works to disrupt and trouble the market logic of higher education.³⁴ With this in mind, Lodge’s conception that “the university is a kind of microcosm of society at large” (*Write On* 169) assumes further significance. For Parkin, the marketisation of philosophy is representative of the spread of neoliberalism, no matter how ill-suited, into all sectors of public life.

Despite its all-too-accurate speculations, *The Mind and Body Shop* has long been out-of-print and is rarely cited in contemporary critical discourse. Regardless of its lack of popularity or critical acclaim, the novel offers an illuminating example of how the effects of economisation of education can be starkly rendered in fiction. To read *The Mind and Body Shop* is to straddle a world close to our present situation,

³⁴ There is no record of Merleau-Ponty ever making such a claim; however, his *Humanism and Terror* (1969) does suggest that Marxism is the only political model to avoid meaningless development. Merleau-Ponty states that “to denounce [Marxism] is to dig the grave of Reason in history. After that there can be no more dreams or adventures” (153). Parkin was a scholar and critic of Marxism, therefore Parkin’s misquotation is likely deliberate.

and one that imagines the future of education institutions that scholars must work together to prevent. Parkin's novel tackles the uncomfortable changes head-on and encompasses the pressures of economisation. As a professor of sociology, as opposed to a creative writer-in-residence, Parkin "displays a rare and generally undervalued talent for writing satirical accounts of academic practice" (Chalfen 377). *The Mind and Body Shop* presents a stark dystopian vision of the future that we may or may not already be living in. Unlike the expression of the value of the humanities through its literary nuance (as in *Possession* and *On Beauty*), Parkin's novel tackles the context of neoliberalism directly by placing a price on the practice of philosophy.

5.3 The Future of a Liberal Education in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*

Unlike Parkin's little-read academic fiction, *On Beauty* is a popular academic novel. It was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize (2005), won the Orange Prize for Fiction (2006), and made the *New York Times* bestseller list. Additionally, given its contemporaneity, *On Beauty* most readily speaks to the present moment in higher education. It offers an intensive literary examination of the crisis in the humanities. Smith offers a realistic vision of a humanities department, which conforms to many of the expectations of traditional campus fiction. For example, while *The Secret History* offered glimpses of contemporary education, the focus on antiquity and mysticism obscures a realistic representation of university life today. Reading Smith's novel in direct contrast to Byatt's, Tartt's, and Parkin's, the plot is calm and the tone is sincere. Alexander Dick and Christina Lupton argue that *On Beauty* presents "a strong sense that the humanities today are in a state of crisis: the values of equality and relativism assumed in the principles of liberal education have been outpaced [...]"

by the competitive forces of the market” (115). Although the signs of economisation are less obvious in Smith’s novel than in *The Mind and Body Shop*, they have significant repercussions even while they simmer beneath the surface.

Reading *On Beauty* as a document of the state of contemporary higher education in England, one might object that the majority of the action in the novel is located on the wrong continent. However, I argue that the representation of the humanities in *On Beauty* is transatlantic and, therefore, draws particular attention to the close relationship between British and American higher education institutions. Numerous academic novels detail the connections among transatlantic academic circles, most famously in Malcolm Bradbury’s *Stepping Westward* (1965) and David Lodge’s *Changing Places* (1975). It is also important to note that many of the same debates concerning the value of the humanities in England are presently being loudly stated in the US. For example, Henry Giroux details the “growing corporatization and privatization at all levels of schooling” (“Cultural Politics and the Crisis of the University”) on the other side of the Atlantic. Whilst *On Beauty* is predominately set in America, both central characters as well as their author are British. Monty Kipps is an Anglicised Trinidadian (the latter identity being one he seeks to distance himself from), living in Wellington, located on the outskirts of Boston. Howard Belsey is a British immigrant living in the US and is keen to leave his working-class roots behind.

Monty and Howard, the two central protagonists in the novel, are binary opposites much like the Vice Chancellor and the Professor Hambro in *The Mind and Body Shop*. A sense of competition and pressure of success within an academic hierarchy motivates their actions throughout the novel. Smith opens *On Beauty* with an epigraph from renowned humanist Harold J. Blackham that simply states: “we

refuse to be each other” (2). Monty and Howard are near-perfect antagonists. The battleground between the two Art Historians is well worn, since “for fifteen years the two men had been moving in similar circles; passing through the same universities, contributing to the same journals, sometimes sharing a stage – but never an opinion – during panel discussions” (29). The tension between these two colleagues is accentuated by Monty’s recent publication on Rembrandt, much to Howard’s frustration as he had been working on a Rembrandt biography for many years. Their books are also counterparts: Howard’s *Against Rembrandt* provides an intricate anti-humanist reading, whilst Monty’s “hugely popular (and populist) brick [is] designed to sit heavily atop the *New York Times* bestseller list for half a year” (29). Monty is a charismatic and confident “cultural conservative” (115). His knighthood and influential media-type friends evidence his social standing. Howard, the “radical art theorist” (115) is a paranoid, bumbling, highly self-critical liberal. Literary critic Susan Alice Fischer demonstrates how “the conflict between Howard and Monty, though professional and political, is shaped by a multi-layered personal history as well as by a different ideological interpretation of history” (87): the basis of their conflict lies in fundamental differences in their moral, political, and philosophical beliefs. Such agonism speaks to the discussion in chapter two concerning debates between Snow and Leavis, and Arnold and Huxley.

Rather than exploring tensions between disciplines, Smith’s novel explores conflict within them. The metaphor at the heart of *On Beauty* is that Howard and Monty personify the oppositional views of the culture wars. In doing so, Smith references a convention within the genre of the academic novel.³⁵ Smith’s portrayal

³⁵ The prevalence of the culture wars is reflected as a popular topic in numerous academic novels, most notably in Alison Lurie’s *The War Between the Tates* (1974) and John L’Heureux’s *The Handmaid of Desire* (1996).

of these broad political divisions as being embodied in two professors' hatred for one another fast-tracks a reader's interest in the affairs of the academy without getting weighed down by academic jargon or anecdotal departmental in-fighting. Instead, the characters represent a universal debate, which had shaped politics inside and outside the university setting for decades, an indeed, in different forms since Antiquity. The only commonality that Howard and Monty share is that neither expresses any doubt in the value of academic study. Smith's academics are in disagreement about *how* Art History should be researched and taught but both fervently believe that it is of value. Smith's novel thus promotes the benefits of the humanities regardless of the specific school of thought that engagement in education relies upon. *On Beauty* is a novel that extolls the power of aesthetics, the experiences of life and learning, and is a treatise on beauty itself, perhaps the most unquantifiable and least-outcome driven of all areas of study.

In the above discussion of academic fiction, many of the characters identified as pivotal in understanding the value of the humanities are male. This is a trend within campus fiction, with female characters often side-lined as romantic interests, nuisances, or the wives of professors.³⁶ The character of Zora Belsey presents a relief from this male-dominated conversation. The inclusion of a female perspective on the crisis, albeit from a somewhat secondary character in *On Beauty*, is worthy of further consideration. Zora is Howard Belsey's daughter and an undergraduate student at the University of Wellington. She represents an optimistic future for the disciplines untarnished by the departmental bitterness of Howard or Monty. As Frank Rich argues: "by not taking sides in the Belsey-versus-Kipps debate, [Smith] wants to lift us to the higher view not dreamt of in their philosophies. It's too late for burnt-

³⁶ See further discussion in Deegan, D. (1951); Carter, I. (1990) 159-66; Rađenović, M. (2016).

out cases like Howard and Monty, who are both far too jaded and cynical to see past the culture wars to the beauty of culture itself” (“Zadie Smith’s Culture Warriors”).

Zora believes in the potential of the university, and of intellectual activity more widely, as a force for social good. Despite growing up in an academic household, Zora “had the strangest ideas about academics — she found it extraordinary that they should be capable of gossip or venal thoughts. She was hopelessly naïve about them” (Smith 111).

I argue that Smith uses Zora as a tool for communicating the aspirations of the university anew. She gives voice to the transformative power of a liberal education in the twenty-first century. Like John Stuart Mill stated in his famous address at St Andrews, Zora is committed to understanding “what beauty is [and to] desire to realize it in [her] own life — will keep before [her]self a type of perfect beauty in human character, to light [her] attempt at self-culture” (Mill 255). In alignment with the aspirations of liberal thinkers in the Victorian age, who sought to uphold certain educational values during its expansion in England, Zora cherishes the same ideals, even when surrounded by the market-driven and competitive culture of contemporary American higher education. Zora’s idealisation of knowledge, in an age “after Foucault” (*On Beauty* 219) stands as a representative image for the future, and the continued support for the value of the humanities despite the controversy of the culture wars. She acts as an intermediary between Howard and Monty and represents an attempt to reconcile the fissures left in the academy after the culture wars.

The name ‘Zora’ has an alliterative link to Zadie herself, and her naïve optimism in the future of the university echoes Smith’s personal reflections. In interview, Smith is quick to defend the value of higher education: “to me, a university

is one of the most precious of human institutions; that's why when they fall short of their own ideals, you feel so cheated" ("A Conversation"). Following the publication of *On Beauty* Smith reflected: "I wanted to be an academic and planned to be one, and then I started writing *White Teeth* — ten years of my life vanished into novels. I certainly think of it as the road less travelled, a road I would have liked to go down" ("A Conversation"). Smith has taught as a creative writing professor at New York University for over eight years (2010-present), which — in a very real sense — represents the power of fiction in defending the values of higher education. Her articulation of the necessity of a liberal education is evident in the actions of her fictional characters, but also in her public interviews and work as a writer within a university setting.³⁷

³⁷ Smith has also served as a writer in residence at Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, and has taught fiction at Columbia University School for the Arts.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the articulation of the value of the humanities within academic fiction. Investigative and interpretative readings of academic fiction provide a way to question what it means to undertake humanities scholarship from a position outside economically-focused debates regarding specific government policy. Markets tell us that stories have no value, however, the lived experience portrayed in literature tells us otherwise. Fictional representation provides an alternative mode of valuation as opposed to economic indicators of success. Reading academic fiction and further exploring the possibility that the “telling itself” (5) can be a discursive tool for developing a robust response to the current changes within higher education from a humanities perspective. In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot observes that “literary works seem to leave comprehension behind and yet seem never to reach it, so that it must be said of them that they are always understood too much and always too little” (239). The novel negotiates a place between the particular (i.e. the life of a single academic) and the general (i.e. intellectual values and ethical responsibilities).

I argue that the novel opens up an alternative space for considering value, between the humanities and the policymaker. It is this “search for and analysis of values” (Gardner 19) that has been examined in the fictional examples of this chapter, which act as testimonials of the ability to articulate value beyond the monochromatic language of the marketplace. In this way, despite cliché and satiric representations, the novels can offer productive representations with which to better understand our current situation. The three investigations explored above, provide different dimensions of articulating the value of an education in the humanities, each of which has strengths and limitations as forms of representation. The first

discussion, that considered the nostalgic liberal education model portrayed in *Tom Brown at Oxford* and *The Secret History*, does little to tackle elitism but offers insight into the experience of an education that is driven by aspirations unrelated to metrics and quantified knowledges. The second investigation, focusing on *Middlemarch* and *Possession*, explored a more embodied representation of the value of the humanities in processes of research and connection to others. The “particular web” (G. Eliot 140) of *Middlemarch* created a fictional space to articulate the potential of literature to capture meaning, while the quest narrative of *Possession* captured a sense of the excitement inherent in intellectual pursuit. The third investigation addressed novels that directly negotiate economic values within an educational setting. *Jude the Obscure* continues to demonstrate the power of imaginative work to represent and challenge systemic societal injustices. Parkin and Smith offer diverse responses to the corporate university that can be used to highlight the forgotten narratives of value that neoliberalism seeks to render unintelligible. *The Mind and Body Shop* defamiliarises the structures neoliberalism that we have become numb to, reminding us that its end result — Philosophy in a Jacuzzi — is nonsense. *On Beauty* offers an optimistic recognition of the enduring appeal of the core values of aesthetic scholarship.

Academic fiction is a productive site wherein contemporary debates can be explored beyond the limits of white papers with a language that allows the values of higher education enough space to thrive. The importance of this methodological approach is particularly evident when contrasted with the depressing terminology of business-speak which chapter four will address. Literary representation offers a break from the myopic position that articulating worth in terms of economic value is the only way to preserve the humanities in the neoliberal university.

CHAPTER FOUR

Impact and the Humanities: The Rise of Accountability in Public Cultural Life

Introduction

This chapter explores how certain kinds of assessment criteria influence the valuation of the humanities. In particular, I discuss the implementation of the impact score into the Research Excellence Framework (REF henceforth) in the 2014 cycle. In doing so, I demonstrate how the REF's valuation of impact primarily rewards research that produces a financial profit. This raises a concern for the humanities since research within cultural bodies of knowledge such as history, the arts, philosophy, and linguistics is not necessarily compatible with the market. The title of Stefan Collini's article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 November 2009, encapsulates the threat: "Impact on Humanities: Researchers Must Take a Stand Now or Be Judged and Rewarded as Salesmen". The premise behind this critique is that an understanding of how value is measured has a profound effect on value itself. Therefore, this chapter interrogates the effects of assessment criteria upon the concept of public valuation of cultural knowledge in order to demonstrate the coercive effects of government policy, and consider the ways in which the humanities might resist such structures.

As Simon Smith et al. note, "as early as the 1993 white paper *Realising Our Potential* government science policy specified an impact imperative for UK scientific research" (1370). The initial demand of *Realising Our Potential* stated that "specific policies are designed to get maximum value for money from our annual public

expenditure” (HSMO 5). From a strategy for investment in “scientific research” (Smith et al. 1370), such approaches have expanded into a universal system for research assessment across all disciplines. The 2014 REF impact criteria is exemplary of policy seeking to encourage measurable values in higher education. It is worthwhile to note that impact was present in higher education management rhetoric for several years preceding this formal framework.¹ The 2014 REF submission guidelines, published by the Higher Education Finance Council for England (HEFCE henceforth), July 2011, define impact as follows: “[research] of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design” (48).² The priority of commercial and industrial activity is clear. Impact is knowledge that is immediately useful to society in the form of patentable-ideas, marketable images, cultural events, and products. The focus on external value and public accountability is further underlined by those areas *expressly excluded* from the REF’s definition of impact: “the advancement of academic knowledge within the higher education sector” and “impacts on students, teaching or other activities within the submitting HEI” (HEFCE 48).³ This disregards a large percentage of the work that happens in the humanities, from teaching students to be critical thinkers, to building research communities to address socio-cultural concerns. The REF impact criterion values *the form* of tangible and public output, above the academic quality of such research. Collini argues that this presents a

¹ See Donovan (2007); Spaapen et al. (2007).

² The REF’s definition of scholarship does mean academic research, but is instead refers to “the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases”; all of which are marketable products. See Annex C “Assessment framework and guidance on submissions” 48fn.

³ The acronym HEI stands for higher education institution.

danger as “the only way to justify what goes on ‘inside’ universities is by demonstrating some benefit that happens ‘outside’” (“Impact on Humanities” 19). Perhaps even “demonstrating some benefit” might not be necessary, as studies of abuses of the impact metric indicate.⁴ The act of creating something that can be valued is prioritised over the inherent properties of the research.

Attentiveness to the language of assessment reveals the extent to which business and management models have been into the operation of higher education. In addition to critiquing what the impact criterion seeks to measure, Collini identifies the equally important task of challenging the language that is used to evaluate research. He wonders if perhaps “our ears no longer hear what a fatuous, weaselly phrase ‘Research Excellence Framework’ actually is, or how ludicrous it is to propose that the quality of scholarship can be partly judged in terms of the number of ‘external research users’ or the range of ‘impact indicators’” (“Impact on Humanities” 19). *How* and *why* research is evaluated needs to be placed under scrutiny. Scholars of the humanities scarcely need to be reminded of the significance of language and its use. Martin Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism* (1946) describes language as “a house of being” and argues that “those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home” (147). Heidegger’s philosophical conception of language emphasises the relationship between the words we use and the way we think. For Heidegger, the language with which we think shapes the possibility of thought itself: “thinking comes to an end when it slips out of its element” (149). The accusation is that an instrumental framework is insufficient for describing the values

⁴ For an example of the recent abuse of impact metrics see Roelofs, P. & Gallien, M. (2017) who discuss how “the academic equivalent of a Trump tweet, clickbait with footnotes” received the highest readership in development studies journal *Third World Quarterly*. See also Ioannidis, J. “Why Most Published Research Findings Are False” (2005).

of humanistic study and that each iteration denatures such endeavours. Heidegger writes how in “slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring validity for itself as *technē*, as an instrument of education” (150), and how “the widely and rapidly spreading devastation of language not only undermines aesthetic and moral responsibility in every use of language; it arises from a threat to the essence of humanity” (151). The broad values of the humanities, of the experience of being human, are reduced to an economic instrument in the language of the research assessment.

The Research Council UK’s (RCUK henceforth) mission statement: “Ensuring Excellence with Impact” is a likely candidate for language that Heidegger identifies as devastating, or that Collini describes as “economistic officialise” (19).⁵ The word “excellence” is a competitive value judgement. The superlative nature of excellence, alongside the guarantee that it can be ensured “with Impact” is representative of the dominant kind of rhetoric used to describe value in higher education. The idea of “excellence” has been extensively critiqued.⁶ Moore et al.’s “Excellence R Us’: University Research and the Fetishisation of Excellence” (2017) describes how:

Although, as its ubiquity suggests, “excellence” is used across disciplines to assert value judgements about otherwise incomparable scientific and scholarly endeavours, the concept itself mostly fails to capture the disciplinary qualities it claims to define. Because it lacks content, “excellence” serves in the broadest sense solely as an (aspirational) claim of comparative success: that some thing, person, activity, or institution can be asserted in a hopefully convincing fashion to be “better” or “more important” than some other (often otherwise

⁵ See Research Council UK (2011).

⁶ See Readings, B. (1996) 21-43; Stilgoe, J. (2014); O’Connor P., & O’Hagan, C. (2015) 1943-57.

incomparable) thing, person, activity, or institution — and, crucially, that it is, as a result, more deserving of reward. (3)

Moore et al. highlight the ambiguity of the language of excellence and a desire for the ability to measure success comparatively. The impact criterion promises a framework with which to transform the abstract ideal of excellence, described by Tim Hallett as a “macro-cultural myth” (54), into a statistical assurance. Returning to the RCUK mission statement “Ensuring Excellence with Impact”, it is evident that by ensuring excellence *with* impact, the central role of accountability in the evaluation of research excellence is explicitly reinforced.

Therefore, I argue that answering the question of how the research criterion of impact changes valuation is twofold. First, the language of valuation is reduced to the definitive limits of the framework. In the case of the REF 2014 impact criterion, these are specifically market-oriented and output-driven projects. Second, the introduction of a limited set of metric values generates a competitive environment in which individual scholars must negotiate their worth in the terms of the framework in competition with one another, or cease to be valued. The adoption of the language of business into evaluations of higher education is the result of the extension of neoliberal governance into all public sectors in England. Instead of conceding that some parts of social life are incompatible with marketisation, policymakers have introduced a proliferation of governing strategies in order to address, and in many ways sought to obscure, this incompatibility. Impact is one such mechanism that aims to direct the work of universities towards attainment of value in the market, which raises the question: what can the humanities do? Although Collini identifies that “economic officialise” (19) is a poor language with which to express the value of the humanities, and that the effects of assessment act to corrode long-held values in

those disciplines, his article does not provide a clear indication of any alternative but rather that we must “take a stand now or be judged as salesmen” (“Impact on Humanities” 19). The dissonance between an individual valuation of the humanities and the demands of a national policy framework is clear; this chapter addresses what can be done about this emergent context.

Thankfully, this reflective critique is already underway.⁷ As cited in the introduction, Helen Small reminds us that “it is part of the scholar’s responsibility to keep reinterpreting and re-evaluating that cultural memory in the context of the now” (*The Value of the Humanities* 145). This chapter challenges the shift towards impact in the REF and establishes a sense of ownership that is presently lacking in this critical area of the valuation debate in the humanities. I achieve this by placing impact in dialogue with a longer history of accountability in cultural institutions in England. The implementation of market-metrics into the valuation of cultural life has been ubiquitous in policymaking practice since the 1980s. The argument of this chapter is that by exploring the effects of such measures in other sectors we can establish a language with which to critique these unsuitable and short-sighted metrics. The central examples of this chapter are public art galleries and museums: from their foundational policies in the nineteenth century to their neoliberal management techniques of the 1980s.

I argue that the current imposition of metrics in valuing higher education has strong parallels to debates around the accountability of museums. Therefore, analysis of debates in arts management and museology provides a rich field of critical thinking with which to view the emergent research assessment models within higher education in a clearer light. Such a response contributes to a discursive field

⁷ See Harpham, G. G. (2011) 21-42; Rylance, R. (2016); Drakeman, D. (2016) 109-17.

of policymaking that is lacking in institutional memory within specific government departments, let alone across cultural policy as a whole.⁸ Without the benefit of a historical perspective of cultural valuation, debates about ‘impact’ in contemporary higher education can become reactive, anecdotal, and risk becoming conflicts in which the terms of debate is set by policymakers forcing a reliance on empty aphorisms or regurgitated business-speak.

In order to develop a richer narrative, the first part of this chapter traces the roots of the justification of cultural institutions from their first iterations in the Victorian period. The founding of the British Museum demonstrates how public accountability was integral to the act of establishing the country’s first national museum. This foundational moment in museum policy highlights how deep the roots of economisation are in the context of cultural valuation. Returning to the nineteenth century also offers critiques that are uninhibited by the limited vision of our particular neoliberal moment. The debates included in this section serve to demonstrate that whilst many of the tenets of accountability and narratives of public value were borne out of governance strategies in the mid-Victorian period, there were many other voices and ideas in the debate. This “commitment to pluralism” (Hadley 94) or “many-sidedness” (Thomas 26) is an antidote to cultural policymaking in the 1980s, which follows. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, debates concerning Victorian liberalism capture the tension between the self-reflective individual and the pursuit of national economic interests in laissez-faire capitalism, and the disparities between aristocratic and middle-class proponents of the civilising potential of culture and those working class people excluded from educational privileges and access.

⁸ See Hillman, N. (2016) 331 describing the lack of continuity in staff and shared expertise within Whitehall.

The second part of this chapter addresses the idea of accountability and audit cultures, retracing the adoption of New Public Management (NPM henceforth) strategies in the management of public museums during the 1980-90s. Of equal significance is the emergence of the creative industries under New Labour (1997-2010), in which the creative sector became further marketised. In addition to summarising these legislative changes, this section also investigates the extensive body of scholarship that accompanies the changing measurement mechanisms and assessment culture within public museums. This provides a valuable, although presently underused, resource for the academic humanities. The third and final part of this chapter draws on critical and theoretical arguments established in the previous two sections and conclude that: as humanities scholars come under increasing public scrutiny, it is vital to not only interrogate what we argue about, but *how* we argue, the terms of the debate, and the values they represent.

The need for such an inquiry has never been greater, given the escalation of accountability metrics and the demand for scholars to perform within such frameworks. HEFCE announced that impact would be “deepened and broadened” in the REF 2021, with policy set to implement the “previous intention to increase the impact weighting [from 20%] back to 25% as originally proposed for REF 2014” (“Initial Decisions on the Research Excellence Framework 2021”). Although HEFCE’s phrasing is intentionally non-alarmist, with an emphasis being placed on going “back to” a “previous intention”, this policy represents a significant increase. A sustained scholarly effort is required in order to respond to the poverty of language with which to talk about, and respond to, the challenges facing the value of research in the humanities. To this end, I turn to the richer discourse surrounding the changes in museum studies from the Victorian period to the present day.

1.0 Debates in Public Access, Use, and Accountability in the Victorian Museum

The relationship between Victorian museums and present-day institutions should not be downplayed. Tim Barringer observes that “among the great museums of the Anglo-Saxon world, a majority are creations of the Victorian era” (133). As Barringer notes, the physical buildings that provide the contemporary cultural public spaces are predominantly Victorian.⁹ It is important to recognise that the construction of museum spaces occurred simultaneously to the development of methods for organising public museums. Therefore, the Victorians not only built the walls of the galleries and museums that visitors experience today, but they also initiated the terms on which public museums would be debated and valued. In retracing these foundations, I explore how debates about public access and institutional accountability rose to prominence in policymaking concerning public museums in England.

The following discussion negotiates between individual use and government intentions on a societal scale. Debates concerning public museums range from the individual desires of philanthropists to offer an educative space for individual citizens to the ambition of grand displays of national and imperial powers on the world stage. In order to explore such tensions, I draw on the theoretical work of Michel Foucault. In this way, this chapter follows in the footsteps of many Victorian studies, and indeed cultural studies, scholars who have explored the interrelation between

⁹ Examples in London include Tate Britain (1897), the Museum of Manufactures (1852 now the V&A), the Natural History Museum (1881), but there are many collections across the country, such as the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter (1869), or Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (1885). For further discussion see Barringer (2006) 139.

knowledge, state power and the discipline of subjects. However, rather than retracing the well-worn pathways of *Discipline and Punish* (1975), which have already been excellently explored in works such as D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (1988) or Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990), this chapter makes use of the ideas of Foucault's later work, namely through an application of his concept of governmentality. This work opens up a space for a discussion of self-cultivation that is less readily compatible with the surveillance models in Foucault's earlier work. In "Victorian Studies and the Two Modernities" (2005) Amanda Anderson emphasises the significant difference between "the middle Foucault exemplifying the critique of society [...], and the late Foucault enacting the embrace of aesthetic modernity via his turn to ethos and the self" (198). In addition, Foucault's later work specifically engages with tracing the shift from liberalism to neoliberalism, addressing how the operations of contemporary mechanisms of governance regulate both the individual and the state. Before turning to the historical analysis of museum management, I first outline the application of Foucault's work on governmentality in the context of the Victorian museum.

1.1 Defining Foucauldian Governmentality

Foucault's work on governmentality is frequently cited in critiques of the operation of national museums in England. Scholars of cultural administration and museology often use the word 'governmentality' in passing and the term has become somewhat of a hollow reference, rarely interrogated, and seemingly representative of everything that is problematic about contemporary market-led governance. This section aims to

replenish the current discourse in order for a precise critique of accountability culture in public value.

In February 1978 at the Collège de France in Paris, Foucault presented a lecture series entitled “*Sécurité, Territoire et Population*” [Security, Territory and Population] that introduced the concept of governmentality, which represented a radical turning point in his critical thinking. In 2001, Thomas Lemke identified that this work “remained largely unpublished” and the lecture series was first translated in its entirety into English in 2007.¹⁰ The lectures are of immediate use to this project since they concentrate on the historical genealogy of the state operating under neoliberalism. Lemke explains how “the semantic linking of governing (*gouverner*) and modes of thought (*mentalité*) indicates that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them” (191). Governmentality thus describes the *how* of power and interrogates the ways in which apparatuses structurally enact political intentions. At the end of the lecture series, Foucault defined governmentality as follows:

1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex power [...]
2. The tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power — sovereignty, discipline, and so on — of the type of power which may be termed ‘government’, and which has led to the development of a

¹⁰ Foucault’s lecture in which he defined governmentality was translated by Rosi Braidotti, and published in *Ideology & Consciousness* (Autumn 1979).

- series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, and, to the development of a series of knowledges (*savoirs*).
3. The process, or rather the result of the process, by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually 'governmentalized'. (*Security, Territory, and Population* 108-9)

Foucault argues that governmentality is the dominant organising principle throughout the West. In capturing how the “calculations and tactics” of governance structures are integral to understanding the relationship between knowledge and power, Foucault shows that the process of running a government in this administrative fashion results in a self-reinforcing feedback loop. Foucault demonstrates that a government governs by many more means than upholding and writing the law. He argues that the action of *how* one governs is formative and it is through “the result of the process” (108) that power is established. In the example of general accountability indexes, a study of governmentality would observe how the action of accounting affects what is being counted. In the context of impact measurement, the designation of categories and the processes of calculating the value would have profound implications on the impact itself.

This conception is useful for this chapter for two reasons: first, it articulates how small-scale actions of governance culminate in system-wide effects. Using this theoretical understanding this chapter will explore how the language and mechanisms of evaluation influence social understanding of the cultural sector. Second, Foucault’s idea of governmentality also provides a means through which an individual might intervene in ideology. He argues that “the tactics of government that

allow the continual definition of what and should or should not fall within the state's competence, and so on" (*Security, Territory, Population* 109), understanding policy and governance as malleable and on-going instead of didactic and omnipotent offers a chance for critical intervention. With the relevance of this framework identified, the following section explores how scholars have used an understanding of state actions to engage in debates concerning the value of the public museum.

1.2 National Interests in the Public Museum: Governance and Powers of Display

Tony Bennett draws on Foucauldian theory in his scholarship on the public museum; he conceives of the Victorian museum as a site that transforms abstract ideas into calculable values. In *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) Bennett argues that the mid-Victorian period was "a significant turning point in the development of British museum policy in clearly enunciating the principles of the modern museum conceived as an instrument of public education" (71). He posits that the management of public museums was driven by "governmental strategies rather than from any commitment to democratic principles as unqualified ends in themselves" (246). In other words, Bennett argues that museums were never valued most highly by policymakers for their potential to produce a social good on an individual level. His conception of a museum as an apparatus relies heavily on a Foucauldian reading of how power operates within and through institutions. Bennett's reading offers significant insight into the national interests concerning the development of public museums during the nineteenth century. For example, he identifies the South Kensington Museum as the prototypical model of a space that is "both material and symbolic, of a power to 'show and tell' [...] to incorporate the people within the

processes of the state” (87). In *The Birth of the Museum*, public institutions are conceptualised as sites for new strategies of governance in which citizens are encouraged to improve themselves. In opening up cultural knowledge to a public audience in this manner, self-regulation replaces active government intervention.¹¹ The idea that the management of a public museum might have such coercive power is further evidenced in Tim Barringer’s “Victorian Culture and the Museum: Before and After the White Cube” (2006), which demonstrates the commodification of knowledge in public museums during the nineteenth century. Barringer suggests that the South Kensington Museum was “large, impersonal, bureaucratic, systematic in its economic and political instincts” (137). Barringer reinforces Bennett’s assertion that the priority of public museums operates above the level of the individual and is principally concerned with governance at a national scale.

Scholars have subsequently questioned Bennett’s somewhat polemical argument that an “ambition towards a specular dominance over a totality” (66) is an inherent trait in the expansion of public museums. After all, such a vision leaves a visitor of the museum without agency. On balance, it should be noted that Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum* was published prior to the full translation of Foucault’s late lectures, which provide a greater consideration for individual ethos. In his 2006 article, Barringer concedes that, despite the government’s intention behind the South Kensington Museum, “the responses of museum visitors to displays and exhibitions often radically differs from the stated aims of the curators” (138). Bennett’s work does not allow a space for the consideration that “the careful regulation of the visitor’s body and behaviour [often] fails to result in the transmission of coherent

¹¹ Bennett further theorises the rise of governmentality in British politics elsewhere, writing in “Putting Policy into Cultural Studies” (1992) that under New Labour culture in its modern sense emerged “as both the object and the instrument of government” (26).

ideological positions from curator to viewer” (Barringer 138-39). What a government wants a citizen to do, and what an individual actually does are two very different things. However, it is important to recognise that totalising control was the *ambition* if not the end result of public displays of culture. In *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (2009) Paul Young identifies that “Bennett’s analysis of exhibition space is open to the charge that it overplays the disciplinary impact of these events” (81). Young’s work offers a more productive reading of the Foucauldian discursive capacity of public museums on a national scale, which avoids such grand claims concerning the control of individuals’ actions. He recognises that although “the focus of Bennett’s work falls upon the way in which exhibitions encouraged individual citizens to discipline themselves as productive members of the modern nation-state” (81) it is perhaps more useful to consider the state as a body in itself. In focusing on the user of the museum — the visitor to what Bennett describes as the “Exhibitionary Complex” (9) — *The Birth of the Museum* fails to acknowledge the ways in which the state itself is subject to discipline on an global scale.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 is testament to the global importance of exhibition culture, and the role of museums in representing national progress and power on an international stage. The Crystal Palace is exemplary of how cultural and industrial progress was manifested through display culture. Young identifies how the processes of exhibition “privileged the role of the Palace in disciplining nation-states as productive members of the modern global economy” (81). To quote Foucault’s lecture, 1 February 1978, directly: “to govern a state will thus mean the application of economy, the establishment of a economy, at the level of the state as a whole, that is to say exercising supervision and control over its inhabitants, wealth, and the

conduct of all and each, as that of a father's over his household and goods" (*Security, Territory, Population* 95). This paternalistic conception of the state is even in the domestic sphere, entirely economic. Young's association of the exhibitionary space as a representative economy in the Crystal Palace is arguably at work in the organisation of all Victorian public museums. Thomas Greenwood provides historical testimony for this in his chapter on "Why Should Every Town Have a Museum?" (1888), asserting that "we don't want Old England to be behind other countries" (390), citing America, France, Germany, and the Australian Colonies as competitive examples in this regard. Sharon Macdonald observes that, perhaps better than any other phenomena, museums allow "nation states to show their mastery over the world" (85). Robert Aguirre's *Informal Empire* (2005) further evidences the significance of imperial powers of display in the context of Mexico and Central America. *Informal Empire* demonstrates how during the Victorian era "entire cultures were miniaturized, domesticated, displayed, and made flat in descriptive lists and catalogues" (35). Aguirre draws on Bruno Latour's idea of inscription, which explores the consequence of flattening cultural knowledge into discrete "packages of information (Aguirre xxiv), or "centres of calculation" (Latour, *Science in Action*, 225). Accordingly, Aguirre argues that

inscriptions solve the problem of scale; they reduce a world of ungainly objects into flat packages of information that can be reproduced, reshuffled, recombined, superimposed over one another, made part of a written text, and, most crucially, merged with "geometry" (i.e. three-dimensional relations) to represent the world out there. (xxiv)

The national imperative to control and collect fits with the wider doctrine of imperialism. Such research supports claims that the Victorian museum should be understood as “a productive and reproductive social body” (Black 43). The museum makes manifest abstract notions - in this case the nation - by curating, organising, and exhibiting objects to represent it.

This section has detailed how national interests are essential in a consideration of the value of public museums to those in power in the Victorian period. The Victorian museum acts as a tangible manifestation of state knowledge on a national scale. Scholarly work has extensively explored the operation of transforming museum culture into a national asset. For example, in *Museums and the Public Sphere* (2012) Jennifer Barrett proposes that “emerging modern public museums were a vital part of the industrialization and colonial processes” owing to the ways in which “museums catalogued and presented socioeconomic and technological change to their audiences” (47). Amongst those involved in the development of public collections, Henry Cole was perhaps the most significant figure in the expansion and modernisation of museum culture in London in the mid-late Victorian period.¹² Brandon Taylor describes how Cole saw the development of public museums as “a symbol and expression of how a great manufacturing nation should develop and instruct – and hence create – its subjects” (70). The development of self-regulating individuals is the end-point of governmentality. In this conception, with the market as a regulatory force, the subject that Cole created has an intensively restricted level of agency. However, this chapter does not consider the history of museums at a national level alone. The following section presents a narrative of the foundation of the British Museum in terms of the individual aspirations of its trustees

¹² Henry Cole was a commissioner for the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the first director of the South Kensington Museum between 1857-73. See Bonython & Burton (2003).

and visitors. The study of the operation of the public museums through Foucauldian governmentality requires an understanding of the precise ways in which governance interacted with the public museum at an operational level. In *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges* (2011) Bröckling et al. identify how, unlike broad critiques of ideology, studies of governmentality:

do not describe ideas or theories in terms of a true-false distinction and imply no opposition between power and knowledge. Rather, they investigate the discursive operations, speakers' positions, and institutional mechanisms through which truth claims are produced, and which power effects are tied to these truths. Studies of governmentality trace the contours of this productive power, which produces a specific (and always selective) knowledge and in this way generates definitions of problems and fields of governmental intervention in the first place. (12)

Bennett, Barringer, and Young have explored the implications of Foucauldian theory in generating the idea of a national social body and the concept of exhibition as a tool for representing and thereby extending state power. I examine the operations of government, the *how* of power, in order to better understand how the management of museums came to generate the idea of cultural public accountability. This builds upon the scholarly foundations discussed above, but marks a shift of focus from the effects and aspirations of power to the more mundane operation of power.

1.3 The British Museum: The Rise of Debates in Public Accountability and Access

To outline a history of the foundation of the British Museum is also to chart the birth of the idea of accountability in the cultural sector. The following narrative outlines the initial conception of the museum, and records how the government's conception of a 'public' museum led to a focus on access and accountability in its governance. The discussion progresses as follows: first, I provide a description of the motivations behind the museum; second, I introduce the two key challenges that the museum faced in its foundational years, namely access and accountability; third, I explore government actions in establishing Select Committees during the 1830s designed to ameliorate the above concerns. In doing so, this case study of the British Museum exposes the ways in which the culture of management and governance shaped the very idea of a public national museum.

The British Museum opened to the public on 15 January 1759.¹³ The collection of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), renowned physician, naturalist, and collector, formed the basis for the museums' display. His dying request formed the foundation for the first public museum in England. Sloane's will expressed that his collection should be used for "the improvement, knowledge and information of all persons" (3) and available for "the use and improvement of physic, and other arts and sciences, and [the] benefit of mankind" (3). When Sloane died, aged 93, the 71,000 objects in his collection were offered for sale to Parliament for £20,000. This was a low price for the collection and it is estimated that the value of the collection was closer to £50,000. Parliament agreed that Sloane's bequest was "of much greater intrinsic

¹³ The collection was initially located in Montagu House in Bloomsbury being obtained "as a repository for the infant establishment" (v) according to the historian Henry Clarke in *The British Museum: Antiquities and Natural History: a Handbook Guide for Visitors* (1843).

Value than the Sum of Twenty thousand Pounds” and resolved that the collection “be kept intire, and maintained fur the Use and Benefit of the Publick” (Journal of the House of Commons 6 April 1753 747). This opportunity was used by Parliament to combine the purchases of several bequests of books and manuscripts.¹⁴ The final Act was, therefore, not Sloane’s alone but instead

an Act for purchasing of the Museum, or Collection, of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts; and for providing One central Re’pository for the better Reception and more convenient Use of the said Collections, and of the Cottonian Library, and of the Additions thereto. (Journal of the House of Commons 7 June 1753 838)

The Act became law on the 7 June 1753 when George II gave the royal ascent, founding the first national museum in England.

From the outset, the appointed Board of Trustees for the museum was closely related to Parliament. The British Museum Act of 1753 ordered that of “the forty-two member Board, nineteen were members by virtue of the position they held in government, and they were the important offices of the state” (Cash 21). The trustees were predominately high-ranking statesmen and aristocrats, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Duke of Portland. This association between the management of the museum and Parliament remains intact to this day; the Prime Minister appoints fifteen members of the twenty-five-member board. In *A Social History of Museums* (1975) Kenneth Hudson explains that although the British Museum belonged to the state, those in charge of

¹⁴ For detailed information about the contents and history of these other collections see Cash, D. (2002).

the museum's management were "exclusive, elitist and, not infrequently, precious" and notes that "visitors were admitted as a privilege, not as a right" (6). As the following section details, the museum's first trustees compromised Sloane's ambitions for an accessible collection.

In the six years between Sloane's death and the museum opening the trustees significantly reinterpreted the notion of public access. The manuscripts of Thomas Birch (1705–1766) provide an extensive record of the discussion amongst the initial trustees.¹⁵ By 1756, Sloane's designation of "all persons" (3) was restricted by the Board of Trustees to "the Use of learned & studious men" (T. Birch fols. 118-20). There was much discussion during the winter of 1756 of how to prevent "persons of mean and low Degree and Rude or ill Behaviour from Intruding on such who were designed to have free Access to the Repository" (T. Birch fol. 115). In *Access to Museum Culture: the British Museum from 1753-1836* (2002) Derek Cash summarises that "the Committee was very explicit in categorizing people into classes and associating values to the classes and determined that one should not infringe upon the other" (37). The above comments concerning those of "mean and low Degree" clearly demonstrate the elitism that was manifest amongst the Board members.

In an attempt to control access to the collections, it was decided that entrance to the British Museum be based upon the personal recommendation of a member of the board. This restricted access to the extent that "no persons [...] whatsoever be admitted to Inspect or View the Collections but by a proper Authority from the Trustees" (T. Birch fol. 115). On opening in 1759, visitors were required to acquire a ticket in order to access the collection (see figure one).

¹⁵ "A Collection of Papers Relating to the Establishment and Government of the British Museum" are held in the British Library. See Birch MS 4,449 fols. 118-20.

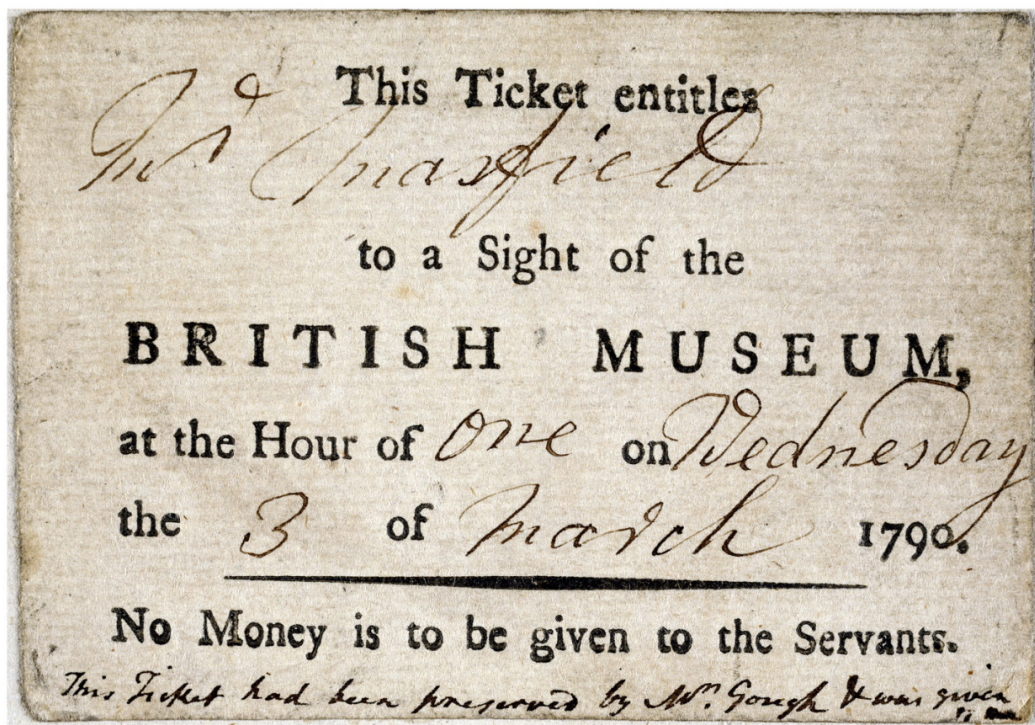


Figure 1. An entrance ticket for Mr. Masfield to the British Museum on 3 March 1790. The ticketing system operated in various forms until 1809. Image Source: Trustees of the British Museum.

These personal tickets were granted by Trustees and in order to attain one, an applicant needed to be an acquaintance of a Trustee, be able to write a letter of introduction (a cost prohibitive for some), or to have time to travel to London to leave their details with a museum porter for examination and potential entrance at a later date. In addition to the financial barriers to entry, the process of applying for tickets excluded those who were unable to read and write. As figure two attests, a large proportion of the public in 1750 were illiterate and, although literacy greatly improved throughout the nineteenth century, as late as 1843 some 30% of men and approximately 50% of women were still unable to read, let alone write a personal letter requesting access to the British Museum.¹⁶

¹⁶ Although literacy was considerably higher in London than in other areas, the ability to gain entrance was denied to many. For further data concerning literacy in specific regions see Cressy, D. (1980) 69-77.

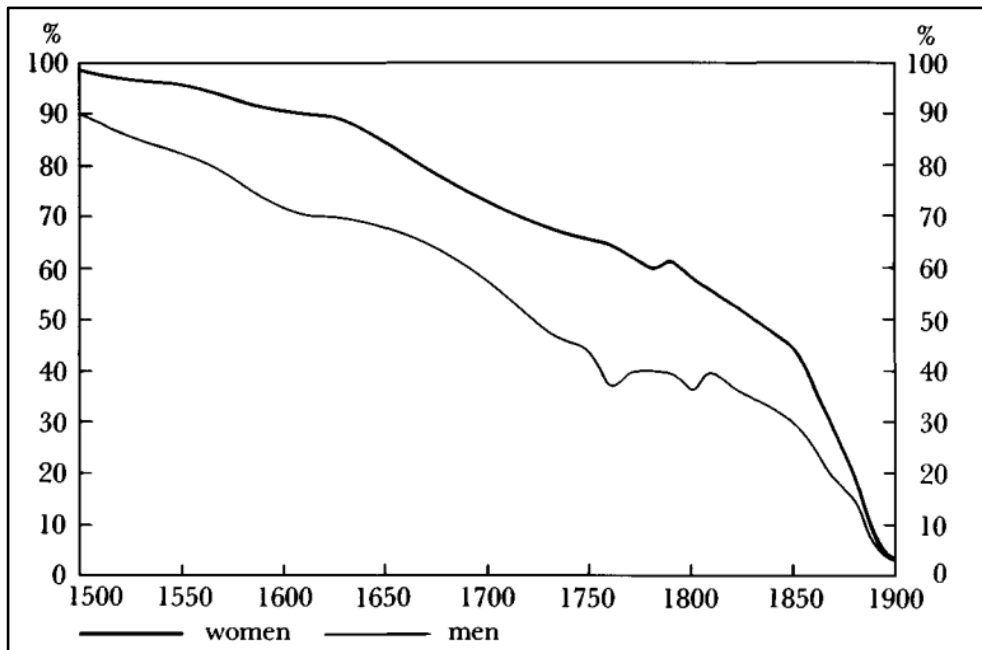


Figure 2. Estimated illiteracy of men and women in England, 1500–1900. Graph Source: Cressy, David. *Literacy and the Social Order*. Cambridge University Press, 1980, 177.

Beyond literacy, the financial cost of writing presents another significant limitation in public access to the museum. Robert Hume describes how “in the realm of cultural production, paper was vastly more expensive then than now” (“The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England” 379) and letter writing materials were a luxury to many households. Until 1840, the price of letters were charges to the recipient, meaning that if an individual wanted to gain access to the museum, they would need to have enough money to pay for the response letter from a trustee. Hudson describes how the process of applying for an entrance ticket “was likely to take at least two weeks, and the investigations into credentials could last as long as several months” (9). Edward Miller further emphasises the restrictedness of this approach in *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (1973), describing how the process of entrance to the museum was “deliberately made as difficult as possible” (63). Consequently, there was a low rate of attendance in the first years

after opening the British Museum.¹⁷

The above accounts demonstrate that, despite Sloane's clear instruction, the obstructive actions of the Trustees significantly restricted the public's access to the museum. In *The British Museum: A History* (2002) Sir David Wilson (former Director of the British Museum 1977-92) affirms that in the early years of the museum "the doors were only opened a crack" (14). Reports show that between 1759 and 1799, "visitors were not at all numerous, the maximum for some years about sixty a day" (E. Miller 64). To encourage an increase in public access was seen as undesirable in the day-to-day management of the British Museum during the late 1700 and early 1800s. The statutes and rules formed by the Board of Trustees in December 1756 outlines this management decision:

for altho it [The British Museum] was chiefly designed for the use of learned and studious men, both natives and foreigners, in their researches into the several parts of knowledge; yet being founded at the expence [sic] of the public, it may be judged reasonably, that the advantages accruing that it should be rendered as general, as may be consistent with the several considerations above mentioned. (Ward fols. 18-25)

These founding rules acknowledged that the public funded the financial expenses of the museum. However, in the phrase "yet", it is possible to identify the roots for exclusion, since it discloses the secondary importance of public access to the

¹⁷ There are external factors such as the general level of public education, access to public transportation, and the social perception of London as being dangerous which may have contributed to low attendance in the first years. However, these external concerns are not the specific interest of this chapter, and the effects of management in the public sector, and therefore must remain an area to be taken up in future research. Source: "Accessing Enlightenment" *British Museum Study Guide* (2017) 2.

primary use educated men within a closed circle. Therefore, the initial success of the Board of Trustees in establishing a public museum, open to all, is questionable at best.

Such negligence regarding the museums' founding principles attracted increasing attention in the press and Parliamentary debates of the 1820s and 1830s. A number of letters to the editors of *The Times* during the early 1820s expressed a frustration in struggling to access the British Museum and its reading room. One such letter, published 10 October 1823, authored by "A Member of the University of Cambridge" reveals how "the reading rooms of this great national establishment are hermetically sealed against the majority of those who would wish to frequent them" (2). Another critical letter, published on 23 October 1823, corroborated that "abuses do exist in the quarters alluded to" (Antiquarius 3) and are "disgraceful to our national character" (3). A further letter, published 18 November 1825 using the pseudonym 'Syntax', provides an account of the "low shuffling tricks and petty prejudices" (4) of museum officials (citing Mr Planta and Mr Baber).¹⁸ The author complains of bureaucrats who "imagine that the best way of showing their authority is by excluding others, as much as they can, from participating of what is committed to their charge" (Syntax 4). In these complaints it is the management of the museum, rather than the innate value of its contents, that are the subject of criticism. The idea that for the knowledge in a museum to be valuable it should be accessible and used by the public is implicit in these concerns.

Similar alarms over limitation of access were taken up in Parliament during the

¹⁸ Mr Joseph Planta was the Principal Librarian at the British Museum from 1799 until his death in 1827, and previously had held an assistant librarian position since 1773. Mr Henry Hervey Baber assumed a junior role at the museum in 1807 and was appointed to the office of keeper of the printed books in 1812. He resigned the role in response to the recommendation of a Select Committee into the Museum Management in 1836.

1820-30s. On 16 February 1821, Mr Lennard, an Independent MP for Ipswich, argued that

considering the large sums which had been paid from the public purse for the establishment and maintenance of this institution, he must say, that those grants were very improvidently made, should it turn out, that instead of being found available for a public purpose, it was merely an establishment for the gratification of private favour or individual patronage. (HC Deb vol. 4 col. 724)

The ideas of the “public purse” and the “public purpose” of museums neatly capture the notion that accountability was to serve individual citizens but also to the national Treasury as a governing body.¹⁹ As with the example of the Great Exhibition in 1851, Parliamentary interest in the public museum is rooted in a concern for the perception of the nation. There are numerous comments from MPs in the House of Commons throughout the 1820s that negatively compared the level of access to the British Museum to public institutions in France, Italy, and elsewhere in Continental Europe.²⁰ In the same speech cited above Lennard proposed that, in addition to being disadvantageous to individual museum visitors denied access, it was “not honourable to the character of this country” for access to cultural knowledge to be restricted.

Substantial changes to the management of the museum in terms of accountability from Parliament began in the 1830s. This delay between the sentiment of the public and MPs and legislative action may be attributed to the

¹⁹ This relates to the discussion of Frow's image of the contradictory contacts of liberalism cited in the introductory chapter, see section 3.1.

²⁰ For example see Mr Grey Bennett in the House of Commons Debate on 29 March 1824, vol. 10 col. 1467 and Lord Althorp in the House of Commons Debate on 25 March 1833, vol. 16. col. 1004.

relocation and the extensive building work at the British Museum that took place during the late 1820s and early 1830s.²¹ Growing Parliamentary concerns resulted in the establishment of the Select Committee into the Condition, Management and Affairs of the British Museum during the 1830s. The Select Committee Reports, published in 1835 and 1836, offer valuable insight into the emergence of the narrative of accountability. During this time, close scrutiny was given to the operation of the museum, from wages and salaries of museum officials to the recording of visitor numbers. The reforms and debates of the 1830s mark a shift towards accountability based on the collection of data to demonstrate efficacy in the management of public money. The reports of the 1835-36 Select Committee hearings amount to more than 1500 pages of evidence. The *Report from the Select Committee on Condition, Management and Affairs of British Museum*, 14 July 1836, reached several resolutions that primarily concerned the organisation of the board and the organisation and hiring of department heads within the museum. The report also implemented the extension of visitation hours for the public stating that “the Museum shall be open on Public Days be hereafter from Ten o’clock until Seven throughout the months of May, June, July and August; and that the Reading-Room be opened throughout the Year at Nine o’clock in the morning” (iv). The museum was also to be “opened during the Easter, Whitsun and Christmas weeks, except Sundays and Christmas-Day” (iv). These improvements to access were recorded in terms of number, closer scrutiny of salary, number of employees, and increased hours of visitation for the public. The effects were calculated in equally arithmetical terms: visitor numbers slowly increased “from 35,581 persons in 1815-16 to 99,112

²¹ A shift of conversation from access to building plans is noticeable in 1823-4. See HC Deb 1 July 1823 vol. 9 cols. 1357-6 and HC Deb 29 March 1824 vol. 10 cols. 1466-76. However, by the mid-1830s with the renovation of the physical museum underway, the conversation returned to visitation and accountability to the wider public for whom the museum was intended.

in 1830-31" (E. Miller 146); by 1875 there were 573,317 visitors and there were "655,688 five years later, and 767,402 in 1882" (257).

Following the publication of the Select Committee reports, the government was highly interested in the accountability of the public museum. For example, William Ewart argued that "it could not be denied by any rational man that this great institution should be thrown open, to the public who paid so liberally for its maintenance" (HC Deb. 11 February 1836 vol. 31 col. 310). Such perceptions are at the root of accountability being presented in exclusively economic terms within the context of public cultural institutions in England. One of the museums' trustees, Reverend Josiah Forshall, lamented this change during the 1835 Select Committee hearing:

we have [...] an impediment in the very freedom of our political constitution: the necessity of perpetual reference to the House of Commons, the jealousy of that House in regard to the mode in which the public money is expended, the clamour, more or less prevalent, for economy, furnishing sometimes a reason with the Government for declining expense, and always a convenient excuse; these are obstacles in a great measure peculiar to this country, and they tend to prevent that course of dignified liberality in many points. (Parliamentary Papers, 6 August 1835, 45)

Explaining expenditure and justifying the accountability to Parliament became part of the management of the British Museum. Forshall demonstrates how the demand for access and openness, a public purpose, became conflated with the cost of the museum, and the effect on the public purse.

1.4 The Rise of Accountability: Quantification as Justification in the Victorian Museum

The emphasis placed on visitor numbers during the British Museum Select Committee hearings throughout the 1830s provide clear signs of the quantification of the value of public museums. Furthermore, discussions of opening hours and other numerical data became the focus of Parliamentary debates concerning the purpose of museums. This section details how this emergent metric evaluation, developed from its foundations in the management of the British Museum particularly regard to defining institutional accountability.

William Jevons provides a vivid description of the measurement of visitor numbers at South Kensington Art Museum. His essay on the “Use and Abuse of Museums” (1881) outlines several criticisms concerning the deficiency of calculating the value of museums in numerical terms. Jevons argues that the calculation of footfall inside the museum is of no significance to an understanding its value. He satirically describes how the museum administrators “make a great point of setting up turnstiles to record the precise number of visitors, and they can tell you to a unit the exact amount of civilising effect produced in any day, week, month or year” (54). ‘They’ are the collectors of evidence or, more precisely, the captors of the elusive notion of public value.²² Jevons’ critique of turnstiles challenges the notion that a museums’ success can be calculated by quantitative means. In defence of his claim that the mechanisms of measurement are insufficient, Jevons raises “the well-known fact that the attendance at Museums is greatest on wet days” (54). Inclement weather exposes how the valuation of footfall is an inadequate measurement of the

²² The turnstile is a particularly significant representation of the reductive quantification of the arts and humanities. See, for example, Frank Parkin’s *The Mind and Body Shop* in which “students entered the lecture theatres [...] through coin operated turnstiles” (13).

use of the museum *as a museum*, as opposed to a shelter from the rain or a capacious and dry place for children to play.

Museums and the Public Sphere describes how “the museum as a space of leisure is not a new phenomenon” (58). Barrett observes that since the mid-Victorian period “people used to picnic in the galleries of the Louvre and the British Museum” (58). This image undermines the idea of the museum as a solely educative space and introduces the free play of individual experience and usage. Whilst the majority of this chapter has concentrated on the perspectives of the policymaker and the museum trustee, it is worth considering that, since the mid-1800s, the public has regarded museums as more than a venue for the acquisition of knowledge. Jevons affirms that in the nineteenth-century museums were a form of entertainment: “many go to a public Museum just as they take a walk, without a thought or care as to what they are going to see” (54).²³ It is significant to note that in the House of Common debates above, there was little attention paid to the motivations for museum visitation. For Jevons, the difficulty of calculating a fixed value of a museum through footfall is rendered useless since the building is additionally valued as a shelter, as well as a site of education. His suspicion of quantifying museum experience, despite his bias as a leading economist, is significant. It points to an interest in the agency of individuals, as self-cultivating, capable of improvement, and able to resist the state’s structures of governance.

In “Why Should Every Town Have a Museum?” Greenwood argues that museums are beneficial “for young people of both sexes [as] they afford a place for recreation to which they can go, instead of loitering aimlessly about the public streets” (390). Although educational reforms, such as the 1870 Elementary

²³ For a contemporary perspective on this, see van Aalst & Boogaarts (2002).

Education Act, would improve school attendance and the quality of education this “was only the start of a process which would take more than twenty years to complete” (Gillard). Therefore, during the 1850-70s the moral instruction of young people remained a particular concern among social reformers. Greenwood’s declaration offers a marked shift from the reluctance of the British Museum’s first Trustees to admit “persons of mean and low Degree” (Birch fol. 115) into the collections. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the abstract idea that museums were of general civic benefit had entered popular discourse. John Tenniel’s cartoon “The Sunday Question. The Public House; or, The House For The Public?” published in *Punch*, 17 April 1869, visualised a citizens choice between imbibing, at the “Public House”, or the civilising power of education at the museum, “the House for the Public” (see figure three).

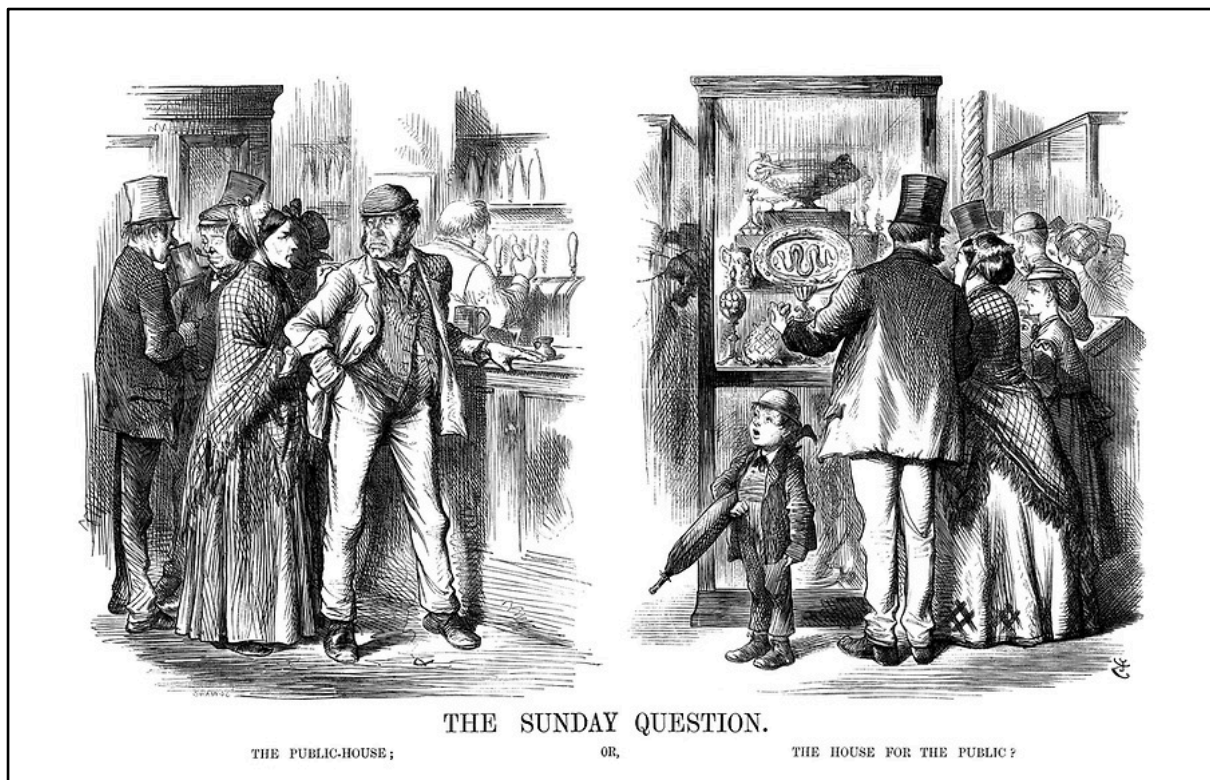


Figure 3. John Tenniel *The Sunday Question. The Public House; or, The House For The Public?* *Punch*, 17 April 1869.

In *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (2000) Barbara Black identifies that museums “competed directly with the public house by offering evening hours and specifically targeted exhibits” (33). This reinforces Greenwood’s perspective that the presence of a public museum has a civilising function. Both Tenniel and Greenwood regard the museum as a better alternative to loitering or consuming alcohol, but fail to provide any description of how museum attendance directly benefits the individual. For example, Greenwood states that “a Museum and Free Library are as necessary for the mental and moral health of the citizens” (389) and are as important as “good sanitary arrangements, water supply and street lighting are for their physical health and comfort” (389). Greenwood presents museum access as essential as the basic need for water. Greenwood and Tenniel assume that museums have value simply by existing, as if an exposure to hallowed objects inevitably makes visitors more civilised, both through the development of personal moral qualities but also in terms of nationalistic consciousness. Within Parliament, Mr Hume encapsulates this abstracted belief in the civilising potential of the museum, speaking on 30 May 1836, he argues:

[The] British Museum was an exhibition maintained at public cost, and which, therefore, ought to be open to the public upon all possible occasions. For the mechanic to spend his Sunday afternoon with his family in the Museum appeared to him (Mr Hume) a much better disposal of his time than if he were to resort to the public house or the gin palace. [...] The soldier and the mechanic of Paris derived a much higher elevation of mind, and a consequent higher tone of morality, from spending their Sunday afternoon in the Louvre than from besotting themselves in a cabaret. (HC Deb vol. 33 col. 1160)

Hume's assumption that attendance at the museum might act as a panacea for social ills reveals a national interest in creating an obedient working and middle class. The comparison between England and Paris is indicative of an interest in national representation, rather than the cultivation of individual benefits as ends in themselves.

There has been little improvement in the calculation of the value of an individual's experience within a museum since the nineteenth century. Attributing value to museums beyond the number of visitors is a challenging task; therefore it is unsurprising that the convenience of numeric calculation of public impact has come to dominate discussions regarding the public value of museums. However, the above history reveals that this decision is not only convenient or demonstrative of a preference for statistical datum over qualitative statement but is also revelatory of the ideological conception of the museum, above all else, as a national socio-economic commodity.

1.5 Conclusions, Regarding the Victorian Public Museum

Thus far, I have considered the key tenets of the establishment of the idea of the public museum and shown how exhibitionary power operates through, and as a result of, mechanisms of governance. The roots of accountability, both in terms of government funding structures and the political rhetoric surrounding the civilising potential of access to public museums, have been articulated through the examples of the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum. Criticisms of capturing value using quantitative measurement have also been identified. These foundational arguments will be developed in discussing contemporary museums, in which

institutions are increasingly required to make themselves accountable to the Treasury through increasingly bureaucratic procedures. I argue that, as Foucauldian governmentality suggests, the *processes* of policymaking have a profound effect on the results. Although the rise of accountability within museums came to be prominent during the Parliamentary debates on the British Museum during the 1820s and 1830s, the systemic requirement for museums to create case studies of impact and calculate their worth in economic terms is a uniquely late-twentieth-century phenomenon.

Therefore, the second part of this chapter demonstrates the further applicability of Foucauldian governmentality to museums in contemporary England. I argue that during the 1980s the “calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, [and] political economy as its major form of knowledge” (*Security, Territory, Population* 108) became deeply ingrained. This is principally because of the advent of neoliberalism as the dominant political rationality of government, in place of the liberalism of the late-nineteenth century. Lemke’s “The Birth of Bio-Politics” (2001) argues that the key difference between the two frameworks is that neoliberalism rejects “the rational principle for regulating and limiting the action of government in a natural freedom that we should all respect” and instead favours “an artificially arranged liberty: in the entrepreneurial and competitive behaviour of economic-rational individuals” (200). The adoption of economic value as the driving rationality of governance within the cultural sector exemplifies the full implications of Foucauldian governmentality. Beyond its application within the context of the Victorian public museum, a large body of scholarship draws upon governmentality in

order to examine the rise of accountability in cultural policymaking.²⁴ In particular, Nikolas Rose's "Governing by Numbers" (1991) observes how Foucault's late lectures describe the emergence of statistics as "one of the key modalities for the production of the knowledge necessary to govern, rendering the territory to be governed into thought as a domain with its own inherent density and vitality" (676). The density and vitality of this econocratic decision-making process under neoliberalism is interrogated in the following discussion of Thatcherite New Public Management models and the conception of the idea of the creative industries under New Labour.

²⁴ See Rose, N. (1991); Schlesinger, P. (2013); and Donovan & O'Brien (2016).

2.0 Public Expenditure and Public Values

During Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration (1979-90) the means of evaluating cultural organisations were drastically altered.²⁵ Although Thatcher's government is remembered for substantial budget cuts across the cultural sector, the economisation of the value of the cultural institutions has instigated longer lasting effects.²⁶ During the 1980s the rhetoric of economic justification became a formal requirement for government subsidy of creative and cultural ventures. This section explores how this system of governance came to prominence, describing the rise of New Public Management and the transformation of creative knowledge into a market commodity. The following analysis provides a wider context within which to locate the present changes occurring within higher education. A discussion of the creative industries reveals how, as far as policymakers are concerned, there is little space for value outside of the market. However, drawing upon the foundations of governmentality established in this chapter's previous section, allows for critical interpretations of the myopic system of evaluation. Following Bröckling et al. I demonstrate how studies of governmentality are "aimed above all at such programs and procedures. By contrast, the forms of resistance and counterconducts [...] are contingent. They have to be accounted for, but they are not calculable. There is a science of government, but there cannot be one of the art of not being governed" (17). The following section outlines the "programs and procedures" that construct the valuation culture that has come to dominate public cultural life, and now threatens to

²⁵ See Halsey, A. H. (1997); Belfiore and Bennett (2008).

²⁶ See obituaries for Thatcher such as Billington, M., "Margaret Thatcher Casts A Long Shadow" (8 April 2013). Note also that the 2010s saw cuts to public funding in the arts in the UK which are worse than under Thatcher. See Cartwright, A. (2011).

monopolise research assessment in higher education. I return to the idea of developing contingent “forms of resistance” once the objects and objectives of governance are clearly defined.

2.1 “There is No Alternative”: The Rise of Economic Models of Valuation in the Cultural Sector

In “The Birth of Bio-Politics” Lemke identifies that “the theoretical strength of the concept of governmentality consists of the fact that it construes neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political economic reality” but rather a “political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists” (203). The dominance of economic value is so powerful because it obscures that it is a ‘position’, and asserts that it is a ‘truth’, creating what Mark Fisher describes as capitalist realism: “a pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education” (16). Thatcher’s neoliberal slogan “there is no alternative” further encapsulates such an attempt at the creation of a totalising socio-political space. Whilst Thatcher believed that “economics are the method; [and] the object is to change the heart and soul” (*Sunday Times* 3 May 1981), this section argues that the method itself is the most effective means by which cultural values are controlled. Once economic valuation was accepted into the logic of cultural policymaking it became increasingly difficult to imagine an alternative. David Looseley contends that “it is essential for the humanities to constantly point out that the market too is a narrative rather than an incontrovertible datum” (14). Economic valuation is by no means natural; it is imbued with biases that have serious consequences both inside and outside of the academy. The principal difficulty in undermining the persuasive power of economic thinking is the

appearance of objectivity, or neutrality, of data. Bodies of data are seen as matters of fact as opposed to particular positions. However, by drawing upon theories of governmentality and focusing on strategies and tactics of governance, this section seeks to “reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency” (Fisher 17). In drawing attention to the construction of value, of the mechanisms of a particular political project, it becomes possible to articulate that there is an alternative.

2.2 New Public Management

In *The Politics of Culture* (2012) Munira Mirza describes the 1980s as the decade in which

new criteria and assessment came into being [...] alongside more formalisation and bureaucratisation; increased centralisation through the creation of government departments and quasi non-government organisations (quangos); and the growth of statutory and non-statutory guidelines and policy frameworks. (44)

The rise of the New Public Management model offers one specific example of such “formalisation and bureaucratisation” (44). In short, New Public Management (NPM hereafter) is the “shift to a more managerialist approach to the public sector” with a specific “emphasis on efficiency, transparency, accountability, quality assurance, and competition” (Martin and Whitley 54).²⁷ NPM approaches can be applied to private companies, public institutions, and even to the development of countries as a

²⁷ See Barzelay, M. (2002) for further definition.

whole.²⁸ Barry Bozeman attributes the initial popularity of NPM to the context of economic austerity. He observes that NPM thrives as “nations strive to apply scarce resources to meet the needs and rising expectations of citizens” (7). The rhetoric of “doing more with less” complements the perception of scarcity.²⁹ In “A Public Management for All Seasons?” Christopher Hood confirms that the benefits of NPM are “mainly in the direction of cutting costs and doing more for less as a result of better quality management and different structural design” (15). Hood accounts for the intellectual prominence of NPM as the system “offer[s] a neutral and all-purpose instrument for realizing whatever goals elected representatives might set” (10). NPM promises that better management tactics can transform “wasteful, fat, self-seeking, insensitive bureaucracies into fitter, leaner, more efficient and effective organisations which are closer to their customers and more accountable” (Clark 3). Under NPM, the market is perceived to be a means by which to avoid human complication within organisational systems. Claire Donovan and Dave O’Brien (2016) note that policymakers believed that “in the New Public Management the dominant form of organisation was the market as the type of social organisation that would not be subject to the problems associated with traditional public management” (27). The widespread adoption of this system marks the start of governance being driven solely by market rationale in England.

Although the roots of this approach are found in Thatcher’s Conservative administration, the most conspicuous adoption of NPM in a policy document is New Labour’s *Modernising Government* (1999). Tony Blair’s (then Prime Minister)

²⁸ NPM is not a solely UK phenomenon and it is influential in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a large number of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. See McLaughlin, Osborne & Ferlie (2002).

²⁹ This can be observed in political campaigns such as, then Prime Minister, David Cameron’s “The Big Society”, which was driven by the idea of using “people power” in communities to initiate change, without the increase in funding or governmental support.

foreword to the white paper explains that “we are modernising our democratic framework” (1) through an engagement “with how government itself works” (1). *Modernising Government* signifies the belief in the neutrality of market-based evidence at the most fundamental level of government. The report praises the adoption of NPM under Thatcher, which had “brought improved productivity, better value for money and in many cases better quality services” (22). *Modernising Government* guarantees that in the future “all public bodies are properly and fully accountable to the public” (32). In *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History* (2010), Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett describe how this adoption of “evidence-based policy was intended to signal the end of ideologically driven politics” (5). Evidencing value in this way reflected NPM’s aspiration for neutrality. Belfiore and Bennett chart the emergence of this policy preference in the medical professions during the 1990s and its spread across other sectors of governance. The integration of accountability in museums is only one example of the dominance of NPM across the public sector. Peter Miller describes how, with the adoption of NPM, “the calculative practices and language of accountancy have seeped into everyday life” (391). Beyond the management of exclusively economic affairs, the methodologies of NPM came to be seen as offering policymakers, funders and administrators “a neutral and all-purpose instrument” (Hood 10). Michael Sandel reminds us that such measurement only “seems to be non-judgemental” (“A New Politics of the Common Good” my italics). In reality, there are many values implicit in prioritising evidence-based policy, especially within the context of cultural value, which have significant consequences on culture itself. The power of NPM is that it allows for a forgetting, or an obscuring, of the ways in which its models work by offering a language that depoliticises the market with the claim that “there is no alternative”.

2.3 Responses from the Cultural Sector

The above analysis of NPM reveals that a faith in “incontrovertible datum” (Looseley 14) is, in fact, part of an ideological process. Fisher notes how “what is currently called ‘realistic’ was itself once ‘impossible’” (17) and argues that recognising contingencies of value is vital in constructing a critique. To date, scholars of museum studies have interrogated the politics of data collection arguing that the mechanisms that account for the value of culture are inadequate. They contend that assessment criteria emphasise the importance of outputs, which results in an individual’s experiences of culture being subsumed into the demands of national socio-economic strategies. As seen above, this is a criticism that dates back to the foundations of public cultural institutions. Critics have also documented the erosion of intrinsic value in the context of marketisation. In *Capturing Cultural Value* (2004) John Holden expresses the deficiency of the rhetoric of economic efficacy: “we need a language capable of reflecting, recognising and capturing the full range of values expressed through culture” (9). Both the development of increasingly specific and output-led assessment criteria and the rise of economic languages to describe value, such as the ‘creative industries’, are the result of governing using NPM approaches.

The most commonly levelled criticism of processes of valuation within museums is that the mechanisms that determine value are insufficient. Holden maintains that such “concentration on instrumental ‘impacts and outcomes’ has produced organizational and systemic distortions” (19) within the cultural sector today. These distortions are created in response to the “impact” assessment criteria for funding and the positive bias towards cultural proposals that demonstrate wider socio-economic benefits. Hasan Bakhshi et al. pragmatically remind us that “whether we like it or not, governments choose between alternative expenditures. They cannot

spend the same pound twice on a hospital and an art gallery” (17). Such a fiscally motivated argument relies on the belief that the mechanisms that set out to establish an accountable, socially valuable, economically viable museum work.³⁰ However, focusing on outputs often undermines the inherent value of the creative work and leads to a poorer quality result. Cultural institutions dedicate a large amount of time to justify their impact and value rather than concentrating on creating work that produces it. Holden describes the effect of this audit culture, envisioning how

all around the country, cultural organizations – museums, theatres, arts centres and the rest – are holding away days to update their business plans. Library managers are drawing up budgets for their local authority bosses, and voluntary groups are filling in forms, seeking resources to restore historic buildings. They all need money, and they are competing for the attention of those who take decisions within that amorphous beast, the ‘funding system’.
(13)

Holden argues that a significant portion of institutional attention is diverted towards developing business plans and writing funding proposals as opposed to cultural work. The financial imperative within accountability agendas has led to institutional energy being “directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes” (20). The necessity to generate such data indicates the deep-rooted effects of economic accountability upon the sector.

³⁰ For a critique of this assumption, see Selwood, S. (2002); Holden, J. (2004); O’Brien, D. (2010).

These changes first impacted art galleries and museums during the 1980s. Anthony Field, the long-serving Finance Director of the Arts Council between 1957-85 reflects on how, under the pressures of Thatcher's administration, he argued that

we must change the argument to get more funds. We must say that money spent on the Arts was not subsidy but investment. I produced statistics showing that for each one million pounds invested, the Treasury received three million from foreign tours and tourism, royalties and employment taxes. I led the Arts Council into its sad decline of quantifying the arts in material terms. (qtd. in Sinclair 129)

Although Field's reflections on the processes of quantification are personal, they speak to the wider national trends. Today, contemporary statements of value continue to be supported by statistics concerning their economic value. For instance, on their designated campaign page "Why Culture Matters" Arts Council England reported that "Art and Culture contributed £7.7 billion to the economy between 2011 and 2013".³¹ The website contains numerous statistics and an "advocacy toolkit" for making an effective case for the arts to funding bodies; "Why Culture Matters" is phrased in the efficient language of policymakers and relies solely upon instrumental values. The advocacy toolkit is divided into four categories in which culture adds value to society: education, health and wellbeing, society, and the economy. Focusing on outcome-driven valuation means that "instead of talking about what they do, they demonstrate how they have contributed to wider policy agendas such as social inclusion, crime prevention and learning" (Holden 13). Quantified metrics of

³¹ Economic evaluations encroach on the most existential of contexts: "reduced demand for GP and mental health services could already be saving the NHS £500 million a year" (Arts Council England).

instrumental benefits replace any qualitative or intrinsic benefits in a culture. Such an outlook even pervades international cultural projects; for example, UNESCO's "Creative Cities" project (2014-5) set out with ambitions to "draw together vibrant creative communities using culture to make cities thrive" (27). However, the report at the conclusion of the project celebrated the key result as having "generated an estimated £2.4 million from April 2014 to March 2015" (27). No other implications beyond the economic value of the project were included in the final report. For "vibrant creative communities" to "thrive" equates to the generation of financial revenue.

Sara Selwood's "The Politics of Data Collection" (2002) explores the bias inherent in using financial data as justification within the cultural sector. She posits that "much of the data produced about the workings of the cultural sector have been criticized as methodologically flawed and [...] say more about policy intentions than about actual impact" (13). Selwood draws attention to a problem with data collection that has been around since Jevon's critique of the integration of turnstiles in the South Kensington Museum in 1888. Measuring "actual impact" is not simply a matter of counting the number of people, or the revenue generated. There are increasing numbers of scholars interested in developing a language of 'cultural economics' as the preferred answer of how to account for these concerns, but others accuse such attempts of being "a sophisticated form of lying" (Hewison).³² Regardless, this particular debate is beside the point, since it is obvious (to the point of tautology) that even the most advanced metrics for measuring the value of culture still inevitably engage with the dubious activity of condensing human experience into data. My stance is not that such valuation should be disincentivised, rather, that we also need

³² For advocates of cultural economics see Bakhshi, H., et al. (2009).

scholarship and research that attests to the values that will always be overlooked however sophisticated the metrics. What is of higher significance to the present debate is the disparity between what museum curators, administrators, and staff perceive to be valuable in a cultural institution, and what is asked of them through funding and grant criteria. In a 2010 report for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS henceforth), Dave O'Brien describes the "perceived distance between economics, which is the dominant language of government, and the cultural sector, which operates on a very different set of assumptions" (4). These particular assumptions are creative and humanistic and are most commonly expressed in intrinsic defences of the arts, which I outline below.

An intrinsic defence of the value of culture advocates that the public benefit of art is the aesthetic experience of art in and of itself, above and beyond any additional or consequential benefits social, economic, or otherwise. Kant's definition provides the orthodox reference for this view of value. In the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), he writes:

for although such art is capable of being at times directed to ends intrinsically legitimate and praiseworthy, still it becomes reprehensible on account of the subjective injury done in this way to maxims and dispositions, even where objectively the action may be lawful. For it is not enough to do what is right, but we should practise it solely on the ground of its being right. (§53 327)

For Kant, and those who follow such a model of artistic valuation, the usefulness of aesthetic experience is self-evident. He argues that we ought to act on what is morally correct, indicating that acting in the interest of ancillary intrinsic aspirations,

however “legitimate and laudable”, “corrupts” the creative act. Kant further expresses such a sentiment in an earlier section of his critique, “Fine Art”, arguing that “the universal communicability of a pleasure involves in its very concept that the pleasure is not one of enjoyment arising out of mere sensation, but must be one of reflection” (§44 306). Here, Kant maintains that the value of art comes from responding to its inherent properties.³³ However, given the rise of accountability and output-led mechanisms for value it is increasingly hard to make such an aesthetic argument about an individuals’ creative labour.

Established arts administrator, John Tusa is unashamed in his defence of the arts in intrinsic terms: “Mozart is Mozart because of his music and not because he created a tourist industry in Salzburg or gave his name to decadent chocolate” (Art Matters 103). Here, Tusa recognises that the value of Mozart’s music has become conflated with the commercial benefits the ‘Mozart brand’ yields, and in doing so, we “have lost a vocabulary and an area of permitted public discourse where values are valued rather than costed” (29). Today, arguments that hark back to a cultural golden age of museums as sacred sites of cultural appreciation are somewhat misguided.³⁴ The above discussion has shown that the motivations of our Victorian predecessor’s for founding public cultural museums, and the subsequent judgement of the visitor experience are questionable at best. The testimonies of Greenwood, Jevons, and Tenniel chart the unpredictable “use and abuse” of public museums since their inception.

³³ It is important to note, however, the difficulty of aligning Kant’s philosophy as representative for all intrinsic value, as Bradley, B. (2006) attests “Kant utilized at least two different sorts of intrinsic value: one that is possessed only by good wills, and another that is possessed by all rational beings whether morally virtuous or vicious”. Therefore Bradley argues that Kant’s attribution of intrinsic value is applicable to individuals but not to objects or phenomena.

³⁴ Instrumentality is now a new issue. Belfiore & Bennett (2008) argue that instrumentalism is “2500 years old, rather than a degeneration brought about by contemporary funding regimes” (194) citing Plato’s *Republic* as the first source of art being promoted as a means to achieve non-artistic ends.

That said, Tusa's complaint is a specific and historically contingent response to the changes to mechanisms of cultural valuation in the late 1980s and 1990s. His observation that "public good is dismissed as a chimera so long as it cannot be quantified on a balance sheet" (30) is significant. Tusa's identification of the increasing demands on museums to evidence themselves on an exclusively economic scale of assessment criteria is beyond generic rejoinder. The sheer difficulty of making an intrinsic argument for the arts in the public sphere represents the dominance of economic value over all others. *What* is counted, and *how* it is counted, is presently no accurate *account* for value. Tusa argues that culture is, in and of itself, under threat: no longer valued but "costed" (29). The interrelation between mechanisms and metrics of value has established this homogeneity. Museums are thus required to provide calculable evidence in order to be valued despite the misrepresentative nature of the conclusions.

A report by Sara Selwood commissioned by the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) frames the tensions of thinking "intrinsic versus instrumental" most explicitly: "it is no good trying to relate all the value of arts and culture to monetary valuations" and yet it is "equally unhelpful to try to justify the arts as some kind of special case, different from all other spending priorities and subject to unique criteria" (5). Cultural institutions are caught in a difficult position, where they are forced to participate in the economic game playing, inherent in the funding models and policy demands, even if they understand these metrics to misrepresent their work. Bakhshi et al. highlight the "contradiction between the plea that the intrinsic value of art should be accounted for, and the idea that it is beyond accounting" (15). The increase of accountability metrics created an increased demand upon public cultural organisations to provide economic evidence in order to receive further funding.

Under such demanding conditions the possibility for articulating alternative values has become increasingly difficult.

With these considerations in mind, the final part of this section on contemporary museum policy moves beyond such stale divisions caricatured as the “floppy bow ties vs. hard-headed realists” (O’Brien 25).³⁵ Whilst the division between intrinsic and instrumental value continues to form deep intellectual fissures between policymakers and practitioners, the division is more complex than this binary perspective allows. In fact, much to the dismay of those seeking to uphold traditional notions of intrinsic value since the late 1990s, there has been a conflation of artistic value with economic value. Theodor Adorno identifies this entanglement in the word “culture” itself. In “Culture and Administration” (1960) he writes “the inclusion of the objective spirit of an age in the single word “culture” betrays from the onset the administrative view, the task of which, looking down from on high, is to assemble, distribute, evaluate and organize” (107). If ‘culture’ is understood as the means by which to administrate the intrinsic “spirit of an age”, then the notion of the ‘creative industries’ demarcates a particularly troubling state of affairs. The economisation of the arts and humanities is encapsulated in the prominence of the very term *creative industries*. The emergence of the notion of an “industry” of creativity in the last thirty years testifies to the difficulty of sustaining alternative modes of valuation beyond the market.

³⁵ Note this parallels the clichés concerning academics and chancellors within higher education outlined in the fictional representations in chapter three.

2.4 The Arts and the Economy Embroiled: The Rise of the Creative Industries

John Hartley describes the creative industries as a term that “combines – but then radically transforms – two older terms: the *creative* arts and the cultural *industries*” (6 italics original). This definition demonstrates the ways in which the creative industries bring “the arts (i.e. culture) into direct contact with large-scale industries such as media entertainment (i.e. the market)” (6). In the era of creative industries, arts and humanities practices are “embroiled in markets in a more diffuse and plural sense, because their intellectual values are inevitably shaped by their social context and application” (Gibbons et al. 99). The developing relationship between industry and cultural knowledge production is a nuanced phenomenon that is not entirely positive or negative in regard to cultural value. That said, given the dominance of economically-minded valuation mechanisms, it is important that producers of creative knowledge are aware of the historical precedent, emergent tensions, and inherent compromises that the term “creative industries” suppresses.

The concept of the creative industries rose to prominence under New Labour. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was established in 1997 under Blair, and the strategy of the creative industries continued to be encouraged under Gordon Brown through the 2000s. The ‘creative industries’ were first referenced in England in a series of “Creative Industries Mapping Documents” published by the DCMS in 1998. These documents catalogued sectors of creative and cultural production that were of perceived benefit to the British economy. The mapping documents define the creative industries as having “their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS). The creative industries have, therefore, always valued culture in terms of economic

potential.³⁶ The annual *Creative Industries: Focus On* report for 2016 details how “exports of services from the Creative Industries accounted for 9.0 per cent of total exports of services from the UK in 2014” (DCMS). Throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, the creative industries were heralded as emblematic of a successful post-industrial Britain.

From its inception, the term “creative industries” was an invention of policymakers designed to benefit governance as opposed to the cultural sector. Rosamund Davies and Gauti Sigthorsson demonstrate that the process of categorising sectors of creative production under one organisational system came from a governmental drive to “estimate how many people work in the creative industries, how many businesses there are in each area, the export value of creative services from the UK, and how much the creative industries contribute to the gross value added (GVA) of the UK economy as a whole” (9). The function of grouping creative organisations and businesses together operate on a national level. At this scale, statistics show that the “creative industries” is the fastest growing sector of the British economy. In the introduction to the “Creative Industries Mapping Documents 2001”, Chris Smith (then Secretary of State for the DCMS) declared that “the creative industries have moved from the fringes to the mainstream” (3). The concept remains popular among policymakers today, despite the zeal around the creative industries having waned somewhat since the global financial crisis in 2008.³⁷ For example, a 2016 press release from the DCMS announced that “the UK’s Creative Industries now contribute a staggering £84 billion a year — almost £10m an hour —

³⁶ Each of the thirteen sectors are described through the following lenses of analysis: Industry Revenues, UK Market Size, Balance of Trade, Employment, Industry Structure, International Critical Acclaim, Secondary Economic Impact, Potential for Growth and Growing the Sector, and Issues for Consideration. The list demonstrates the economic categorisation that shapes the definition of the “creative industries”. See DCMS. (1998) “Creative Industries Mapping Documents”.

³⁷ See O’Connor, J. (2010); Flew, T. (2012).

to our economy” (DCMS). Ed Vaizey (then acting Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries) described the creative industries as “British magic dust” which “gives our country a unique edge”.³⁸ Such statements reveal that the creative industries are both financially and ideologically valuable to the state.

Work in the field of cultural studies and in the humanities has long critiqued the commodification of culture in these terms.³⁹ Terry Flew argues that the creative industries are “a kind of ‘Trojan Horse’ through which to smuggle neoliberal discourses into the field” which “subvert the critical mission of cultural studies and related fields of humanities scholarship” (6). In addition, a significant body of work indicates that the perceived social and economic benefits of the creative industries are overinflated through their inclusion of technology and software data, which provides a positive skew on the calculation of profits and employment statistics. Flew argues that the “inclusion of the software sector in the creative industries artificially inflated their economic significance in order to align the arts to more high-powered ‘information society’ policy discourses” (13). Such amalgamations with Information Technology persist in valuation of the creative industries today, in 2014 “exports of services from the ‘IT, software and computer services’ was responsible for the largest proportion of service exports from the Creative Industries (44.6%)” (DCMS, “Creative Industries: 2016 Focus On”). Therefore, the ways in which the creative industries are defined is crucial. Neil Garnham explores the effects of including technology in the Creative Industries first mapping documents. He argues that the

³⁸ Quoted in YouTube interview as part of a week-long digital event to raise awareness for the launch of the CREATE UK strategy in July 2014.

³⁹ For cultural studies see McRobbie, A. (1996); Harney, S. (2010). For critical humanities see Brown, W. (2003); Bourdieu, P. (1998); Gagnier, R. (2000).

inclusion of IT and software meant that the DCMS was able to secure more money because of perceived skills shortages in these areas. He describes how “skill shortages in the ICT industries were a major drag on economic growth and relative competitiveness” (27). This was a key motivating force in the overall support of the creative industries. What is evident in the above history is the continued importance of management approaches in shaping cultural policy throughout the 1990s and that playing a game in which the rules were set out by policymakers has disadvantaged the creative sector in several distinct ways.

The legacy of NPM continues to exert its influence upon output-led values and works in tandem with the drive towards accountability inherent in the *Modernising Government* white paper, published under New Labour. Flew describes how the “association of creative industries with the modernisation project of Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ was strong” (11). As culture came to be perceived as an industry throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, artistic value has become tied to economic benefit. Anne Boddington et al. observe how this New Labour philosophy “conceived knowledge as a form of currency that could be shared, distributed and acquired” (6). Such framing devalues the intrinsic qualities of creative knowledge, seeing value only when they produce a currency or a commodity that can be exchanged. The implication of considering “knowledge as a form of currency” (6) speaks back to Bennett’s observations about the Victorian museum and the Foucauldian “power to ‘show and tell’” (*The Birth of the Museum* 87). As seen in the Victorian museum, the contemporary museum is of equal interest to policymakers when thinking at a national level. However, unlike the imperialist nationalism in collections such as the British Museum’s, today knowledge is most valuable in its potential for transference rather than as a discrete representative object owned and managed by the state.

The value of cultural activity is measured by economic exchange; in the conception of culture as an industry, creative practices and organisations are transformed into valuable national assets within a global marketplace.

Despite the prevalence of misgivings about the rhetoric of the creative industries, there has been little change to the assessment mechanisms since the 1980s. A study conducted by the RAND Corporation details that “although many advocates of the arts believe intrinsic benefits are of primary importance, they are reluctant to introduce them into the policy discussion because they do not believe such ideas will resonate with most legislators and policymakers” (McCarthy et al. 37-8). Therefore, a reluctance of arts and humanities scholars and practitioners to engage in arguments concerning intrinsic value leads to a public debate that mischaracterises what they stand for. Currently, as opposed to a discussion about alternative values, the arts and culture sector largely conform to funding requirements in offering justifications in the form of economic value.⁴⁰ The economisation of arts funding criteria in the 1980s, demonstrates that cultural institutions are often reluctant to reject arguments that promote their wider societal value, albeit in solely economic terms. In her 2015 article, “‘Impact’, ‘Value’ and ‘Bad Economics’: Making Sense of the Problem of Value in the Arts and Humanities”, Belfiore argues that the language of the creative industries has been widely adopted because it “appears to offer a rhetorically powerful articulation of value and an attendant rationale for funding, critically able to win the approval of a Treasury department set on cutting public expenditure” (101). This conformity is problematic and ultimately leads to “the collapse of value into impact of the sort that lends itself to be expressed in monetary terms” (105). The rhetoric of the cultural sector reveals an

⁴⁰ See Bérubé, M. (2002); Parker, J. (2008); Belfiore, E. (2015).

“anxiety of justification” (105) that has emerged under the present conditions of assessment and valuation within the cultural sector, with a range of negative effects.

The above discussion has demonstrated the influence of the economic valuation upon the management of museums over the last thirty years. The influences of NPM within the cultural sector persist today. In light of this, I argue that the prioritisation of impact in higher education has been foreshadowed by the accountability agenda in the museum sector during the 1980s and 1990s.

Attentiveness to the changes and challenges facing museums in the past and present provides humanities scholars with a set of debates that are historically rooted, extensively researched, and widely debated. They offer evidence from which to respond to the seemingly ‘new’ questions of the value facing the humanities. Considering the conclusions of Foucault’s “Society Must Be Defended” lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-6, Bröckling et al. observe how

subjects are not merely effects of the exercise of power, but also possess self-will and agency — this is already at work conceptually in the copresence of power and freedom in the idea of government. [...] Students being evaluated by professors, employees supervised by their superiors — all of them are not merely objects of government, nor are they fully determined by technologies of control. Their manner of operating rather resembles a relay: in articulating themselves as subjects they take part in power relations, thus reproducing and transforming them. (14)

This state of governance operates as a form of praxis, whereby those who are affected participate in their own negation. Intervening in this process requires

individual agency, which is a liberal rather than a neoliberal trait. In our present moment, reclaiming a position that suggests that there is an alternative is challenging. With the benefit of the experience and critical argument from both Victorian debates and contemporary museum studies, the final section of this chapter reconsiders the emergent mechanisms of assessment and accountability within higher education.

3.0 REF-lections for the Academic Humanities

So far, this chapter has historicised and located changes to the valuation of humanities research within a wider narrative of cultural value in England by reflecting on accountability within the Victorian Museum and management of cultural policy in the 1980s. Tusa's complaint, discussed above, that "we have lost a vocabulary and an area of permitted public discourse where values are valued rather than costed" (Art Matters 29) is a clear precursor to Collini's lament that "economistic officialise" ("Impact on Humanities" 19) has overrun the mechanisms of valuation within humanities departments. There are many correlations between the public cultural sector and the debates concerning the value of the humanities. This section explores four key lessons that can be taken from the above narrative concerning the management of museums, each of which contributes towards a clearer understanding of the present changes concerning impact assessment within higher education.

First, the discussion of the foundation of the British Museum identified how the interest in the public museum principally operated on a depersonalised scale, which was dictated by imperial interest in exhibitions of national power and an abstract, but largely unenforced, desire to use culture in order to civilise the lower classes. Second, analysis of the Victorian critique of turnstiles versus public use of museums opened up a debate concerning the limitations of economic measurement and revealed how ever granular metrics cannot accurately account for those values that resist quantification. Mechanisms of valuation that focus on outputs and impacts as indicators of value are identified as being insufficient. Third, close interpretation of the operation of New Public Management demonstrated the restriction on alternative values under neoliberal governance. Theories of governmentality expose how this

control is enacted in the processes and mechanisms of the assessment criteria. Finally, within a cultural milieu dominated by the logic of the *creative industries* making an intrinsic argument for the value of the arts and humanities is increasingly difficult and at odds with social value debates. This section specifically negotiates recent changes surrounding impact in higher education with assistance from these considerations from the museum sector. In this way, the correspondences between the two sectors are made explicit and productively put to work.

3.1 Reinforcing National Interests within the Impact Agenda

In an afterword to John Holmwood's *A Manifesto for the Public University* (2011) Sir Steve Smith, then President of Universities UK (UUK henceforth), acknowledges the economic preference of policymakers. Smith recounts that when facing the changes to higher education policy in 2009-10, "[UUK] felt the language of economics was the only language that would secure the prosperity of our universities and higher education institutions" (129). Smith admits that "we tailored a narrative that did not start with the universities and what might be good for them, but with the economy, and specifically with the best strategy to ensure future economic growth" (131). Reading such an admission, alongside the regretful comments of Anthony Field (see section 2.3) concerning the "sad decline to quantifying arts in material terms" (129), offers a portentous vision for the future valuation of universities in England, as such conformity is seen to have severe consequences.

Further examples of institutional compliance to national economic narratives are widespread within universities and other educational bodies across the UK. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) published an economic calculation of

the value of their research funding in their “Leading the World: the Economic Impact of UK Arts and Humanities Research” report (2009). This was achieved by hiring a multinational professional services company, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), who calculated that “for every £1 spent on research by the AHRC, the nation may derive as much as £10 of immediate benefit and another £15-£20 of long-term benefit” (3). Such comments evidence the perceived need for the academic humanities to conform to economic models of valuation. Ellen Hazelkorn describes the “shift from valuing intellectual pursuits-for-their-own-sake to measuring research outcomes, impact and relevance” (“Making an Impact” 27). The intrinsic value of the humanities is disregarded in favour of a perspective that sees all degrees as instrumental and all certification as a subset of a national labour market demand.

3.2 The Focus on Outputs and Impacts Misrepresents the Value of the Humanities

Much like the initial changes to accountability in public museums, the decision to revise the REF developed out of policymaking discourse. Government reports and white papers published between 2006-8 are testament to an increased attention to the economic potential of higher education.⁴¹ The conception of the REFs system was first highlighted in the pre-budget report “Investing in Britain’s Potential: Building our Long-Term Future” (December 2006). Given the discussion in part two of this chapter, regarding the trends in NPM and the priorities of neoliberal governance, it should not be a surprise that the government’s vision of the “long-term future” of higher education is couched in economic terms. The report states that “in order to

⁴¹ In particular, see HMSO (March 2006) “Science and innovation investment framework 2004-2014: next steps”; HMSO (December 2006) “Investing in Britain’s Potential: Building our Long-term Future”.

optimise the economic impact of research, the new system will provide greater rewards for user-focused research” (HMSO 58). The measurement of impact was to be numerically calculated. The “Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004 – 2014” (March 2006) clearly outlines the “government’s firm presumption” that “after the 2008 RAE the system for assessing research quality and allocating QR [quality related] funding from the DfES [Department for Education and Skills] will be mainly metrics-based” (10).⁴² The government’s goal was for economically valuable research to be the priority of higher education and therefore the designed assessment criteria that defined value in metric terms.

In “Governing Culture: Legislators, Interpreters and Accountants” (2016) Claire Donovan and Dave O’Brien describe how “the initial proposal from the Treasury was to use a metrics-only approach to gauge the impact of university research upon the economy and industry” (28). Peer review and qualitative metrics were only re-introduced when “the metrics proposed, such as grants from business, and numbers of patents and spin-out companies created, were found to be very low order measures of such impact” (28). This demonstrated, in simple terms, that the main business of higher education is not business. Donovan and O’Brien observe how “the proposed model also centred on the natural and physical sciences and so neglected the humanities, arts, and social sciences, and had little relevance for gauging the wider social, cultural and economic benefits of academic research” (28). As discussed in chapter two, policy favours STEM research, and so the frameworks to measure the value were largely based around scientific research. Donovan has extensively researched the changes in forms of evaluation metrics in higher education in England and in Australia. In “The Qualitative Future of Research

⁴² One could read much about the culture of efficiency in the reduction of the words “quality related” into the meaningless, but more concise, acronym “QR”.

Evaluation” (2007), she describes the “rise in the desire to evaluate the value of publicly funded research for ‘end users’ and industry, and the accompanying urge to construct quantitative measures to aid this assessment” (586). These measures do not organically emerge out of existing higher education assessment, but rather represent an imposed logic that is far from a natural fit.

Somewhat ironically, research to date that has most effectively evidenced the insufficiency of the REF has done so on financial grounds. The 2014 REF proved to be an expensive and time-consuming process for both universities and the governing body, HEFCE.⁴³ Ben Martin describes that a problematic cycle of assessment is emerging:

as mechanisms fail to capture certain aspects of impact, so additions will be made to the assessment machinery, adding to the costs and the compliance burden, encouraging more ‘game-playing’, introducing more perverse incentives and generating more unintended consequences. (251)

The RAE is reported to have cost up to £100 million over each cycle.⁴⁴ Martin argues that given the increased complexity of the REF “the costs (both direct and indirect) are likely to be greater now the impact assessment has been added to it” (251). It is reasonable to assume that the REF costs more than the RAE because HEFCE is running an entire peer review process alongside the additional calculation of impact. The REF press office reports that the 2014 cycle accounted for “52,061 academic staff, 191,150 research outputs [and] 6,975 impact case studies” (“Key Facts”). These numbers represent a large administrative undertaking for each university

⁴³ See Martin, B. (2011); Hazelkorn, E. (2012); Stern, N. (2016).

⁴⁴ See Sastry & Bekhradnia (2006).

department submitting research outputs and impact case studies. The Stern Review “Building on Success and Learning from Experience: An Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework” (July 2016) confirms Martin’s suspicion that the costs in undertaking the REF are high: “estimated at £246m for UK HE sector, [the REF costs are] considerably more than estimates for the 2008 framework which cost around £66 million” (Stern 45). In a Kafkaesque revelation, the costs associated with evaluating the research and generating its impact score, were greater than the combined economic value of all the research that was measured. The government acknowledges that the 2014 exercise was “not entirely successful” (45) given its cost. Stern expressed a desire to improve financial management but offers little hope for redressing the dominance of metric-based evaluation criteria. However, identifying the failure of the system to generate economic revenue is significant. The system that holds academics to economic account to account has not itself been held to account.

3.3 “The System Does Not Speak for Me”

In “Expertise, the Academy and the Governance of Cultural Policy” (2013) Philip Schlesinger asserts that the REF represents a “novel bureaucratic imperative [that] has added a distinctive calculation to activities that have never before been expressly and principally driven by the need to increase university research funding or to secure collective prestige” (33). Schlesinger identifies how these “distinctive calculations” come to shape the actions of the assessed. As the above discussion of New Public Management explored, the actions and processes of governance have a significant effect on the result. In *World-Literature in the Context of Combined and*

Uneven Development (2015) Sharon Deckard et al. define the REF as being a “top-down, state-imposed scheme, centralised and massively bureaucratic” which has been seen to have “deleterious effects on the scope, ambition, originality and independence of humanities scholarship, especially among younger scholars” (2) whose experience is a kind of neoliberal nativism. The emotive language of Schlesinger and Deckard et al. exposes a strong objection to the integration of business and management methodologies into the assessment of the value of the academic humanities.

An individual scholar may have a set of personal and academic aspirations that are at odds with the values that the bureaucratic impact agenda counts as being valuable. This problem not only effects departmental strategy but also has a range of impacts on the locus of an individual: their research choices, employment opportunities, and financial security.⁴⁵ During 2011-13 Jennifer Chubb and Richard Watermeyer conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with senior academics in the UK and Australia on their perceptions regarding impact. They published their findings in a 2017 article, which identified how “sensationaliz[ing] and embellish[ing] impact claims was seen to have become a normalized and necessary, if regretful, aspect of academic culture and arguably par for the course in applying for competitive research funds” (2365). To return to Heidegger’s idea of language as a house of being, it is clear that in adopting such limited tools to think with, academia becomes subservient to market forces. Although many of the academics were sceptical of the validity of metric evaluation, Chubb and Watermeyer note that the “preoccupation with *performing* public accountability occurs with the neglect of *self-*

⁴⁵ In addition, impact on individual scholars is unevenly distributed. Categories such as gender, class, and race, exacerbate unequal distributions of privilege. See Ryan-Flood & Gill (2010) *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* (2010). Rollock, N. (2013) “A political investment: revisiting race and racism in the research process”.

accountability” (2369 italics original). In other words, academics are required to conform to and visibly celebrate the required frameworks in order to subsist, even if such performances go against their personal beliefs. Resignation in the face of systemic change is understandable but does not provide any means of resistance to the erosion of the value of research. Chubb and Watermeyer’s interviews chart this “sense of individual academics shouting into an abyss” (2368) when offering criticism of the REF’s metric-based demands. They also noted the clear incentives for individuals to avoid critiquing the system that measures their value to their employer. Such a situation directly parallels the example of museum funding during the 1980s. Individuals do not agree with the valuation system, however, they feel disempowered to make a change because of the regulatory nature of the system. Cris Shore describes these pressures in “Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance: Universities and the Politics of Accountability” (2008), arguing that:

most academics may know that faith in audit (like faith in ‘the market’) is not borne out by its actual effectiveness in doing what it claims, but [realise that] the structures, careers and interests that have been forged as a result of these audit systems have created a powerful disincentive for individuals to rock the boat publicly. (292)

This encapsulates the effectiveness of neoliberalism, in removing the grounds for its critique: the individual benefit of not speaking up acts against a collective social benefit. Donovan highlights how within higher education “these metrics are in their infancy” (586) and argues that the full extent of the changes are yet to be realised.

Given the novelty of these proposals, scholars have time to alter and challenge the underlying assumptions that misrepresent the work and values of the humanities.

3.4 The Humanities and the Creative Industries

The ways in which higher education, perhaps above and beyond the public cultural sector, is enmeshed with the idea of the creative industries, is most crudely articulated in the national supply and demand quota for graduates. The following discussion provides a further body of evidence to back up the claims established throughout this thesis, that data sets are malleable objects often used irresponsibly by policymakers to portray the appearance of economic progress.

In *Creative Industries: Focus On Employment* (June 2015) the DCMS reported that “one in every six jobs in the UK held by graduates in 2014 was in the Creative Economy” (7). Figure four demonstrates that for the sectors within the creative economy, the number of graduates is significantly higher than the UK average.

	Degree or equivalent	Higher Education	A Level or equivalent	GCSE A* - C or equivalent	Other	No Qualification
Advertising and marketing	59.3%	7.0%	15.0%	12.7%	2.7%	2.5%
Architecture	74.6%	9.6%	6.5%	6.2%	1.5%	0.8%
Crafts	17.9%	6.4%	28.1%	23.9%	9.6%	11.5%
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	46.6%	12.9%	22.3%	10.5%	3.1%	2.6%
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	52.3%	10.9%	18.1%	11.8%	3.6%	2.4%
IT, software and computer services	64.7%	8.9%	14.3%	9.0%	1.8%	0.7%
Museums, galleries and libraries	61.3%	6.6%	13.4%	11.7%	5.5%	1.0%
Music, performing and visual arts	58.4%	10.5%	14.9%	10.7%	2.7%	2.3%
Publishing	60.5%	8.2%	13.7%	10.4%	4.5%	2.4%
Creative Economy Average	58.8%	9.1%	15.5%	10.9%	3.0%	2.0%
UK Economy Average	31.8%	9.7%	23.2%	19.9%	8.4%	5.5%

Figure 4: Proportion of jobs by highest level of qualification in the Creative Economy in 2014. Source:

DCMS (15 June 2015).⁴⁶

Alongside the DCMS, other higher education bodies, such as the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU henceforth), have used employment statistics that affirm the value of the arts and humanities degrees by interpreting this correlation as causal and arguing that higher education provides the required skillsets for employment in the creative industries.

However, a recent HECSU report “What Do Graduates Do?” (November 2016) describes how “whilst the creative arts subjects are linked to the creative industries, there are fewer clear vocational links between the arts and humanities and the labour market” (32). The HECSU study notes that a greater percentage of creative arts graduates working within the creative industries studied subjects such as Design or Performing Arts as opposed to humanities subjects such as History, English, or Languages.⁴⁷ Therefore, such statistics wilfully mischaracterise the relationship between undergraduate degrees and the national labour market. Consequently, scholars must challenge the uses of statistics and draw attention to the ideological positioning of such data collection. In addition, this cross-disciplinary data, which makes use of percentage comparisons, obscures how far more students study the humanities than the creative arts. Therefore, in terms of raw numbers of employees, there are more graduates with a BA in English working within the creative industries than graduates with a background in the Fine Arts, despite the headline of the HECSU report. According to the HESCU 2016 figures, whilst only 9.5% of the

⁴⁶ Note ‘Higher Education’ refers to other qualifications offered at universities and colleges below degree level (such as a Diploma).

⁴⁷ Of the HESCU report participants 42.9% of Design students and 29.5% of Performing Arts students were employed as Arts, Design and Media professionals, while only 3.5% of History, 6.8% of Languages students, and 9.5% of English graduates found employment in this sector. See 34-42.

surveyed English graduates are employed as “Arts, Design and Media Professionals”, this equals 526 people. There are, an impressive sounding, 24% of Fine Arts respondents working in the same sector, however, this represents only 445 individuals. As seen in the data manipulation of ICT skillsets above, in the foundation of the creative industries (section 2.4), these HECSU statistics reveal a national interest in the commercialisation of the creative arts. The headline reads: “total employment in the creative industries increased by 5.5% between 2013 and 2014, to 1.8 million jobs” (32). With the creative industries heralded as a national success story and with the sector being filled with half of arts and humanities graduates, it is unsurprising that alternative modes of valuation of culture are under threat.

That a significant number of arts and humanities graduates find employment in the creative industries in the UK is not intrinsically negative for the academic humanities. However, it is troubling that within wider public discourse there are very few instances of government officials giving any credibility to the idea of an intrinsic value of the arts and humanities. In terms of research assessment culture, the concern of instrumentalism is equally applicable. The expansion of economically focused metrics into the REF mirrors the increasing prioritisation of data concerning graduate employment in the creative industries. There is, however, a significant difference between employment metrics and the evaluation of academic research in the REF. Whilst some students do attend to university solely in order to get a job, making money rarely primarily motivates research in the humanities.

4.0 A Response from the Humanities

In an *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* special issue on the “Public Value of Arts and Humanities Research” (2015) Paul Benneworth identifies how “in acquiescing to the demands from policy-makers under pressure for clarity and simplicity, a sense of nuance, ambivalence, and tension has been lost from these public debates around the public value of arts and humanities research” (5). Both in terms of the configuration of humanities graduates as national assets and the reframing of the value of research in terms of economic profit and impact, it is clear that the narratives of neoliberal governance have significant effects throughout the university. The final section of this chapter addresses how scholars have begun to respond to the changes in impact assessment, and outlines future directions for research in this vital area of debate.

To date, humanities research into the “impact of impact” has been largely informal, presented in comment articles, online blogs, discussions at symposia, and conference plenaries.⁴⁸ Only a handful of academic journals have dedicated special issues to the rise of impact agendas within the humanities.⁴⁹ The majority of research that analyses the implications of research assessment mechanisms for the humanities has been developed in the social sciences.⁵⁰ In their 2012 paper, “Indicators for Research Quality in the Humanities: Opportunities and Limitations”, Michael Oschner et al. detail how researchers have sought to use interviews, bibliometric, and scientometric literature to address the challenges of capturing the value of the humanities within present assessment frameworks. They highlight that

⁴⁰ For blogs and comment, see Anderson, R. (2010); Stilgoe, J. (2014); Lears, J. (2015). For conferences, see Hewison, R. (2011); Schlesinger, P. (2014).

⁴⁹ See *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 2015, vol. 14 no. 1.

⁵⁰ See Oancea & Furlong (2007); Bakioglu & Kurnaz (2009).

there is a “missing link between indicators and humanities scholars’ notions of quality” (1). This reinforces the above discussion, which concluded that the indicators of policy are disconnected from the work that scholars value. Oschner et al. conclude that “bottom-up processes” (5) are required to redress the difficulty in assessing the value of teaching and research. A “bottom-up” approach, aims to give scholars a voice in the construction of quality indicators. Oschner et al. suggest that an engagement with specific disciplinary needs may offer a productive solution to the present dissonance between the assessed and their assessment. As part of the 2017 Palgrave Communications series on *The Future of Research Assessment*, Oschner et al. developed their 2012 findings to highlight recent European initiatives that have sought to “assess SSH [Social Science and Humanities] research with its own approaches instead of applying and adjusting the methods developed for and in the natural and life sciences” (9). Their findings point to the importance of scholars attending to research assessment processes in ways that reflect their disciplinary position. This final section considers the qualities of a humanities-centred contribution. In doing so, it explores the effectiveness of a “bottom up” (5) approach to the future of research assessment in the humanities, by using the basic tenets of humanities research to articulate the full implications of the inclusion of impact within research assessment frameworks.

Humanities scholars have only just begun to explore the full effects of the REF’s assessment approach.⁵¹ In *The Value of the Humanities*, Helen Small identifies in defining the work of the humanities, a common scholarly approach is “individual response (its content and its style)” (57). Critiques that contest the hegemonic agendas of impact at this scale are incompatible with market-led

⁵¹ In 2017, Palgrave Communications launched an open-access special issue on the “Future of Research Assessment” which provides some valuable contributions to this emergent field of debate.

neoliberal structures, but this need not be a flaw. Many individual humanities scholars have personally critiqued the insufficiency of the REF. For example, speaking at a conference at the University of Sheffield, 5 May 2011, Robert Hewison observes that “whoever wrote the documents for the REF, does not appear to have been trained in the humanities” (2011). Hewison’s highlighting “whoever wrote” is a reminder of the human(ity) behind the written word of policy. The language of the REF replicates the economism inherent in present policymaking. Hewison identifies how such a restrictive framework is at odds with a notion of humanities scholarship that is considered and existentially open-ended. He continues, describing how the REF submission advice is written in the “unlovely technocratic language of generic templates, impact sub-profiles, and submitted units, which turn out to be people like me, who put 30 years [of] work into a single book” (2011). The conflation of the individual academic into a “submitted unit” draws attention to the disregard of the specific people working within the professions.

Similarly to Hewison, in a closing address of the CREATE All Hands Conference in Glasgow, 16 September 2014, Schlesinger commented: “our research now has to meet impact criteria that were invented for accountability rather than public intellectuality” (2014). Schlesinger argues that the assessment criterion prioritises the actions of bureaucratic accountability above an engagement with people, through public engagement. The REF system rewards that research that can be counted and accounted for, which produces a bias towards research whose results are economically rather than socially beneficial. Hewison’s and Schlesinger’s appraisals of the REF are, to my mind, entirely correct. Work within the social sciences which has evidenced that humanities scholars recognise alternative values

in their work.⁵² For example “being a courageous risk-taker with authentic intellectual interests” (Guetzkow et al. 206) is highlighted in a 2004 study of the concept of originality within the humanities and social sciences. Humanities scholars need to build upon such evidence, in order to provide an alternative language of value that speaks up for that which the REF neglects.

Given the conflation of economic value and cultural value in the dominant context of the cultural industries, it is unsurprising that scholars are resistant to engage with value narratives. Michael Bérubé describes how academics “tend to regard self-justification as a dubious enterprise best left to the writers of admissions brochures and back-patting liberal-arts mission statements” (25). He likens the writers of brochures (who doubtless are, themselves, humanities graduates employed within the creative industries) to sheep.⁵³ He imitates: “the Humanities teach us what it is to be human, the Arts deepen our spirit, the Humanities preserve our common cultural heritage, bleat, bleat, bleat” (25). This awkward impersonation exposes the difficulty of avoiding clichés when publicly communicating the value of humanities scholarship. However, the representations of fictional humanities departments in chapter three demonstrate the possibility for alternative languages of value beyond bland marketing clichés and other stereotypes. The individual testimonies of Hewison and Schlesinger, above, demonstrate that humanities scholars are resistant to engage in the processes of marketing, and avoid speaking “economistic officialise” (Collini “Impact on Humanities” 19). Their testimonies remind scholars that the articulation of value need not equate to a marketing pitch. Although only on an individual scale, these critiques reject the language that seeks to define

⁵² See Hemlin, S. (1996); Guetzkow et al. (2004); Ochsner et al. (2017).

⁵³ Incidentally, an ovine metaphor is also used by William Deresiewicz in his work on neoliberalism within the US universities: *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite* (2014).

their academic work. Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* concludes by calling for such small acts of resistance as "even glimmers of alternative political and economic possibilities can have disproportionately great effect" (80-1). The agency that is involved in articulating "the system does not speak for me" is perhaps more powerful than has previously been recognised.

Conclusion

Neoliberal governance in higher education in England represents a challenge to long-held ideals of the value of universities. As this thesis has shown, the processes of marketisation and economic determination dominate the language of evidence and justification in higher education. Within such an environment, it is important to work towards a positive valuation of the humanities as opposed to a merely reactive one that reincorporates resistance to neoliberalism into the language of educational value. It is the responsibility of humanities scholars to ensure that alternative values and accounts are pursued. Those working in the humanities should be accountable. Accountable to ourselves, to society and to those members of society that are systemically unable to speak out for themselves, but these are not criteria that are important to the REF. Schlesinger notes that the

dominant discourse celebrates only efficacious knowledge exchange. This banishes any serious consideration of knowledge resistance. Consequently, a major challenge will be to find novel ways of ensuring that inconvenient truths circulate with significant effect in the public domain. (34)

That the REF denies ground for its critique through requiring faculty participation is one of the major challenges facing the humanities. Expressions of individual defences are all too easily dismissed as being inconsequential when contested by large-scale economic and national benefits. However, humanities scholars need to articulate alternative values at the level of the individual in an era of marketisation.

This reclamation of agency and recognition of the value in cultivating of a society of individuals is one last lesson we can take from Victorian notions of a liberal

education. I am not suggesting the anachronistic application of one epoch's ideas and ideals onto another, but I am arguing for the benefit in reviving a mode of thinking that allows for greater agency of individual thought and action. Returning to the fundamental debates about access to higher education, accountability, and the economy offers the contemporary humanities scholar a useful set of considerations.

Like many who argued for the value of a liberal education, Matthew Arnold repeatedly and unashamedly sought to understand the spirit of humanity as opposed to “an outward set of circumstances” (*Culture and Anarchy* 62). In the present moment, a rejection of the idea that “every opinion, no matter how eccentric or ill-grounded, [could] pass itself off as the equal of any other” (Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* 59) is useful to hold in mind. To date, research in the social sciences has only got so far in imagining how this recognition of disciplinary distinction might translate into reformed assessment criteria, and greater contributions are required from the humanities, who are best able to communicate this specialist set of concerns.

I argue that in the contemporary context of higher education in England, no one can better articulate the value of the humanities than those working within it. Therefore, it is the responsibility of scholars to continue to read, to historically interpret, and to interrogate cultural policy that seeks to define them. This thesis has provided a contribution to the development of such an approach, but further research is urgently required in order to better understand and articulate the creation of cultural value and the mechanisms that drive its assessment. Deconstructing the mechanisms and processes of government unmask a uniform and omnipresent policy showing it to be a historically contingent, malleable, and imperfect piece of political machinery. This chapter has outlined a long history of public accountability in

the culture sector from the establishment of the Victorian public museum to the formation of neoliberal assessment criteria. Throughout, there have been intersections between individual and national interests. Sloane's aspiration for a public museum was transformed into a bureaucratic and nationalistic endeavour at the hands of the museum's trustees. The economisation of the value of the Arts Council lies with Anthony Field, and his colleagues, accepting that there was no alternative but to conform to justification and accountability. Steve Smith's admission that Universities UK decided to defend the value of universities in economic terms in the reforms of 2009-2014 demonstrates a similar culture of acceptance.

However, in articulating the value of the humanities, economic value does not represent who we are or the merit of our work. Instead of arguing economically, a revival of a critical disposition proves to be a useful methodological tool through which to construct a socially and historically informed assessment of mechanisms for attributing value. The expansion of neoliberal management metrics and the enduring centrality of the creative industries is testimony to the powerful effects of economic value. However, this chapter has demonstrated how in a critique of phenomena seeking to be perceived as permanent, an understanding of how the processes of value-construction operate aids in actions to denaturalise, contest, and resist.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the value of the humanities is best articulated through the practices of humanities research, by drawing out the historical, linguistic, political and socio-economic discourses that impact of the way in which the humanities are valued. In tracing the shift from liberal to neoliberal education, from the nineteenth century to the present day, this thesis has presented an underdeveloped narrative of the processes of governance and the value of education. Throughout, it is apparent that how value is articulated is of as much significance as the results of the appraisal. The chapters of this thesis have re-framed the present context through a richer historical lens, placing economic valuation within a longer and more diverse context. Representing a plurality of values challenges the seeming irreversibility of neoliberal policy. Given the open-ended nature of scholarship in the humanities, this thesis has covered a wide range of topics: policy interventions, public debates, literary representations, and intersections with the cultural sector. However, in each case, the analysis has relied upon the disciplinary aptitudes of the humanities: close reading, articulation, and an awareness of historical contexts, in order to generate an alternative account of value that is severely lacking from present policy. This conclusion reflects upon the original research questions posed in the introductory chapter and provides an exposition of future areas for research.

1.0 Reflections on Research Questions

In the introduction I set out the following five research questions, which have each been addressed in the following ways:

What are the differences between liberal and neoliberal education?

The introductory chapter highlighted how the relationship between liberalism and neoliberalism is composed of a series of inheritances, correspondences, and echoes. The chapter highlighted that the dualism of liberalism (educative and economic) is integral to the nineteenth-century understanding of the relationship between the individual, policy, and the state. Providing a review of Dinah Birch, Helen Small, and Stefan Collini's scholarship demonstrated the ways in which humanities scholars can productively make use of connections between expressions of liberal and neoliberal education in critiquing present educational valuations.

How can critically reading policy help scholars understand a culture of economism?

Chapter one established a historical narrative of Payment by Results as a means to critique present policymaking culture. Explaining how educational policy was economised between 1858-88 through reform, provided a previously absent history of how economism operates within the very processes of governance. Critical interpretation of the *Browne Report* revealed its interest in fulfilling a national skills deficit as opposed to the cultivating well-rounded citizens. This chapter also observed how the prioritisation of individualism in higher education raises the

potential for liberal values to be reinstated in the direct relationship between the university and individual students.

How does debate between the humanities and the sciences create meaning?

Chapter two provided an insight into the discourse between the sciences and the humanities through examples of cross-disciplinary debate. Returning to the two cultures debate revealed the ways in which rhetorical intervention can alter public perception and how opposition can be a productive site for articulation. Analysis of Arnold and Huxley's exchange served as a reminder of the many values that scientists and humanities scholars share. The chapter concluded by recognising the significance of both *how* the humanities are represented and *who* it is that articulates values within and outside of higher education.

How can fiction act as a reflective tool for articulating value?

Chapter three demonstrated the ways in which fictional representations can articulate the value of the humanities. The chapter provided examples of how academic fiction explores the discursive potential of the novel and provokes imaginative responses with which to address contemporary changes. Three literary investigations offered a series of reflections that challenge the myopic narrative of economic value and open up imaginative spaces in which to consider the strengths and limitations of a liberal education.

How are the academic humanities connected to other cultural institutions?

Chapter four addressed the impact agenda of the 2014 REF by drawing upon a wider context of accountability in public museums. It placed the changes in universities within a wider context of neoliberal governance dating back to cultural policy throughout the 1980 and 1990s. In addition, the discussion of the public museum demonstrated how, since the nineteenth century, cultural values are configured within a framework of national interests and regulated through mechanisms of accountability and assessment of public impact. The chapter drew from critical scholarship in the field of museology in order to provide a language with which humanities scholars can address the contemporary changes facing research assessment culture in higher education.

2.0 The Dominance of Economics and the Value of the Humanities

Paul Temple argues that “higher education in England has changed between 2010 and 2015 to a greater extent than in any other comparable time period” (174). The longer perspective provided by this thesis demonstrates that these recent changes are not without historical precedent. However, this context also has reinforced that the changes within higher education policy between 2008-14 are significant and that the economisation of the value of higher education in England continues today. In an interview with Tim Shipman in the *Sunday Times*, 18 February 2018, Damian Hinds, (the newly appointed Secretary of State for Education) outlined his belief that some courses “have higher returns to the student than others. It’s right that we now ask questions about how that system operates” (Shipman). Hinds’ focus on graduate salaries as a valuation of a degree course is in keeping with a neoliberal monoculture. In his first television appearance on the *Andrew Marr Show*, 18 February 2018, Hinds suggested that reducing the length of some degrees to two years would mean that students could spend “less time out of the labour market” and that making arts and humanities courses cheaper would represent fairer “value for money” (Hinds). The language and the terms of the most contemporary policy debates in higher education remain as monotonal as those highlighted throughout this thesis.

However, humanities scholars are well situated to reiterate a belief in a liberal education and speculate on how an alternative approach to value might be further articulated. In 1895, in an address to the Harvard Young Men's Christian Association the American philosopher William James asserted the following: “believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.” (62) In his talk entitled “Is Life

Worth Living?” James observes that “possibilities, not finished facts, are the realities with which we have actively to deal” (62). Consider a situation in which, instead of defensively reacting to the present undermining of their values, humanities scholars articulate their analysis of the wider historical, cultural, and philosophical narratives in order to shape and take ownership of the valuation debate. Economic metrics might suggest that a humanities degree offers poorer “value for money” but this says nothing about the value of a humanities degree to those electing to study it, or those who spend their lives teaching it. Observing the difference between articulation and justification is essential in this regard. The humanities should actively seek to resist forms of neoliberalism that define value only in economic terms. We should read policy documents and respond to short-termism with historical narratives. We can call out the poverty of the language with which white papers describe the purposes and benefits of education. We must be cogent and critical of the ways in which instruments of assessments articulate value. However, with these essential preconditions in mind, I do believe that the humanities should be held to some account. Small captures this aspiration when she argues that academics do not object to “the idea that they should be socially beneficial” only to the “peculiarly reductive variant of political economy that dictates the terms of assessment” that “fundamentally mistakes the nature and purpose of writing in the humanities, the arts, and the pure sciences” (*The Value of the Humanities* 63). In the present moment, in which neoliberal governance seeps into all sectors of public life, it is the role and responsibility of the humanities to re-imagine and demonstrate alternative narratives beyond the market. This is not a metaphoric or abstract exercise but a real societal need, as the final section of this conclusion illustrates.

3.0 The Need for the Humanities in an Age of Populism

2016 marked a turning point in the rise of right-wing populism in England and the US. The result of the EU referendum and the election of Donald Trump have empowered a political ideology that argues that expertise is elitist. Coupled with the perception that neoliberal governance mechanisms are neutral, populist preferences for “common sense” have created an atmosphere of anti-intellectualism. Prime Minister Theresa May’s empty mantra “Brexit means Brexit” and Michael Gove’s assertion that “people in this country have had enough of experts” are exemplary of unthinking language. In his infamous Brexit interview with Faisal Islam for *Sky News*, 3 June 2016, Gove stated that “I am not asking for people to trust me. I am asking the public to trust themselves, I am asking the public to take back control of our destiny from those organisations which are distant, unaccountable, elitist and don’t have [the public’s] own best interests at heart” (Gove). The vague metaphors of Gove’s speech, pitching the “destiny” of the people against the conspiratorial “elites” are representative of the paper-thin ideology of populism.¹ To effectively critique such expressions requires an ability to articulate the flaws of weak metaphor and highlight unsubstantiated claims. This is work that the humanities: as George Orwell argues in “Politics and the English Language” (1968), “this invasion of one’s mind by ready-made phrases [...] can only be prevented if one is constantly on guard against them, and every such phrase anaesthetizes a portion of one’s brain” (137). Populist narratives in politics and the popular press rely on a discourse of value that is simply inane, as well as exclusively economic. The value of the humanities needs to be

¹ See Mudde, C. (2004) 544 “The Populist Zeitgeist” for discussion of the thin ideology of populism.

articulated with integrity and social intelligence through a discourse that challenges the anaesthetised landscape of popular debate.

However, this engagement cannot be defensive, as Pierre-André Taguieff argues, “populism seems to become stronger the more intellectuals criticize it” (43). Therefore, an effective means through which to articulate the value of intellectual activity is a challenge the humanities continues to face. In *Not For Profit*, Martha Nussbaum states that:

a catalogue of facts, without the ability to assess them, or to understand how a narrative is assembled from evidence, is almost as bad as ignorance, since the pupil will not be able to distinguish ignorant stereotypes purveyed by politicians and cultural leaders from the truth, or bogus claims from valid ones. World history and economic understanding, then, must be humanistic and critical if they are to be at all useful in forming intelligent global citizens. (94)

Facts without understanding and evidence that claims to exist outside of narrative produce a dangerous situation. An ability to interrogate normative statements is urgently necessary. Nussbaum identifies the critical skills that are developed in the humanities, which are required in order to interrogate and understand policy. The skill-sets of the humanities entail a social accountability, which can attend to present debates of language and value. Rather than reacting to specific policy, or seeking to evidence ourselves economically, scholars should be questioning the foundations that support the neoliberal agenda that seeks to undermine them. How the humanities articulate their value matters precisely *because* of the present tensions and the mismatches between the activities of policy and research. To observe

concerns of longer-term significance relies on the ability to step back from the conflict of the present, in order to negotiate the position one holds within a broader perspective. The history of universities is one that continues to be written and the disciplines within the humanities should be at the forefront of the efforts to remember, to revise, and to reform narratives of value.

The final months of writing this thesis have coincided with the largest industrial action in the history of higher education in England. 2018 saw strike action across sixty-five universities which prompted a caesura between teaching, marking, writing, and applying for research grants. Academics have stopped and reflected on their values and the values of their universities. What began as a dispute over pensions grew to incorporate wider questions about the marketisation of education, casualisation of labour, high costs of undergraduate tuition, and the disparity between academic perspectives regarding the value of education and those of the managerial staff and bureaucratic systems. Those on strike called for the revival of a public university that operated as a social institution for critical thinking, rather than as a business. The following pages document some images from the recent protests that were circulated on Twitter. The language on the placards is indicative of the realisation that there is yet a space for critique within the structures of the neoliberal university.



Figure 1. Image of UCU strike, 19 March 2018. Academics hold signs that read “We Are The University”, drawing attention to the mismatch between branding universities as corporate institutions and the individuals that carry out the necessary work to make it function. Photo: @paologerbaudo



Figure 2. Image of UCU strike, 28 February 2018. A protester stands with a placard reading “Academic Is For Life Not Just For Business” on snowy streets of London. Photo:@elena_sampietro



Figure 3. Image of UCU Strike, 28 February 2018. "No More Business As Usual" tweets Kings College London's branch of the University and College Union, with a photograph of a protest placard. Photo Credit: @KCL_UCU



Figure 4. Image of UCU strike, 20 March 2018. Protesters at King College London march in a rally on the final day of planned strike action. Photo Credit: @TheWeeklyBull

“And so the humanities are at a cross-roads” (Plumb 8) but not, as John Plumb imagined in the 1960s, “at a crisis in their existence” (8). They are at a crossroads, wherein those working within higher education are beginning to recognise the need to challenge neoliberal governance structures and the marketisation of higher education. Out of a moment of rupture comes a moment of great opportunity. In *Cruel Optimism* (2011) Lauren Berlant suggests that the present moment is something that can be affectively perceived and altered: “the present is what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we look back” (4). For Berlant, the present is neither pre-determined nor neutral, but is a phenomenon that is subject to revision and by virtue of this, continually up for debate. This notion of unfinishedness is particularly useful in thinking about how scholars might articulate the value of the humanities. Berlant explores the potential of persistence in the present moment, and offers the idea that “agency can be an activity of maintenance, not making; fantasy, without grandiosity; sentience, without full intentionality” (759). The 2018 strike action demonstrated that within the neoliberal university, academics and students still maintain a sense of liberal agency, imagination, and sentience of values that matter beyond the market. The strikes reasserted that there are alternative narratives that still exist and are valuable within higher education.

Humanities scholars who actively oppose the ideological structures of neoliberalism might, at times, feel that “the task of teaching intelligent world citizenship seems so vast that it is tempting to throw one’s hands up and say that it cannot be done” (Nussbaum 81). However, in closing I want to suggest that at this juncture the ability to change the world appears a more enticing prospect than producing research with evidential results that align with restrictive modes of

economic valuation. This thesis has demonstrated that defending the value of the humanities using the tools of economic evidence is not the only way to denote worth. Instead we must draw on the character of our disciplines, in order to articulate the values of higher education that we hold to be necessary and which are vital to the flourishing of our society.

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