The
New
Collection

Edited by:
R. Bayefsky (Editor-in-Chief)
C. Dangerfield, A. DeCarteret, B. Earp, S. Ferguson, K. Lee,
R. Roach, K. Rose, L. Schaposnik, H. Todd

New College, Oxford

The New Collection

Contents

Notes on Contributors

All contributors are members of the MCR of New College at the University of Oxford. They can be contacted at New College, Oxford OX1 3BN.

Rachel Becker	Music Faculty
Catherine Chisholm	Department of Education
Brian Earp	Department of Experimental Psychology
Adam Etinson	Philosophy Faculty
Ruth Helen Faram	MRC Anatomical Neuropharmacology Unit, Department of Pharmacology
Kira Rose	Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Editorial Welcome

Welcome to the sixth volume of the New Collection! The New Collection is the New College graduate journal, founded in order to showcase the variety of academic interests and talents among members of the New College MCR. The New Collection seeks to foster the exchange of ideas among MCR members conducting research in different disciplines, while providing an opportunity for graduate students to gain experience with the academic review process. Our authors have received extensive feedback both from their MCR peers and from members of the SCR – at New College and elsewhere – who are experts in their fields.

The New Collection accepts submissions of academic work from all members of the New College MCR. Submissions should illuminate their topics in an insightful and compelling way while remaining accessible to the non-specialist reader. Submission guidelines are located on the back cover of the journal, and we look forward to the material we will receive next year.

We would like to thank the authors and editors for their hard work, as well as previous editors of the journal for their valuable advice. We have enjoyed the support of the Tutor for Graduates, William Poole, as well as the New College Development Office. The generous assistance of the Warden and Fellows provided us with the financial means necessary for production. We are particularly grateful to those SCR members who reviewed the articles. Special thanks are due also to the typesetters for the skill and attention to detail with which they produced this issue.

We hope that members of the MCR and other readers enjoy this volume!

Rachel Bayefsky, Editor-in-Chief
Kira Rose, Publisher

MCR President's Foreword

This *New Collection* is the sixth in the series, and it showcases a wide variety of articles ranging from literature and music to philosophy and neuroscience. The articles have been submitted by some of our 287 current MCR members. Like its predecessors, this issue of the journal is yet another celebration of the rich interdisciplinary research environment offered at New College.

Along with our bi-weekly graduate colloquia, the New Collection aims to facilitate intellectual collegiality between the Senior and Middle Common Rooms of New College. It allows the young researchers within our MCR to publish their work and go through the beneficial peer-review process provided by leading scholars in their fields, our SCR members. Unlike strictly subject-specific journals, *The New Collection* challenges authors to communicate their research to the wider academic community. Therefore, the contents of this journal are also written for the enjoyment of a non-specialised audience.

I personally regard the existence of the New Collection as a great privilege for our MCR members and as a wonderful reflection of the academic diversity and excellence of New College students. On that note, I would like to thank this year's Editor-in-Chief, Rachel Bayefsky, her editorial team, and everyone who has contributed to this outstanding final publication: *The New Collection*, Volume six.

Berkan Sesen
MCR President 2011

The Warden's Foreword

     In this age of on-line publication, when peer review is sometimes completely absent or has been replaced by blogathons, it's refreshing to receive this issue of *The New Collection*. Not only have all the articles been peer reviewed by leading experts in their respective fields, but many of the contributors have also been mentored and guided by members of the Review Committee and other Fellows.

     It's extremely important for young academics to form the habit of submitting work for publication as soon as it's ready for outside scrutiny. This is especially the case for those working in the humanities and social sciences, where scholarship is often of long gestation and when many at the beginning of their careers are uncertain how original their ideas are. Publication is not necessarily easier for scientists, but they must generally publish results as quickly as possible and typically as members of a team.

     There is another aspect of *The New Collection* editorial policy which presents any would-be contributor with an additional challenge: to write about one's subject in a way that an informed general audience (that is, other members of the MCR) will be able to understand whilst not compromising the complexity and sophistication of one's subject, a challenge that many senior academics and scientists regularly fail to meet. This ability, so ably displayed in the contents of this volume, is needed in an age in which the humanities are increasingly having to demonstrate their relevance, even within the academy itself of all places, and when the general public are losing confidence in scientists to explain why their research deserves generous state funding.

     Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each of these articles commands attention, unlike the contents of many scholarly journals, where one often thinks, 'well, I certainly don't want to read that article'. Not so here. This is no mean accomplishment, either for the authors or the editorial team.

Curtis Price
Warden

For further information on New College's *Vision for Graduate Students*, please contact:

William J. Conner,
Development Director,
New College,
Oxford
OX1 3BN

Email: william.conner@new.ox.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 279 261

Article Summaries

Can science tell us what's objectively true?

Brian Earp

Can science tell us what's objectively true? Or is it merely a clever way to cure doubt – to give us something to believe in, whether it's true or not? In this essay, I look at the pragmatist account of science expounded by Charles Sanders Peirce in his 1877 essay, 'The Fixation of Belief'. Against Peirce, I argue that science does not come naturally to our species, nor does the doubting open-mindedness upon which its practice relies. To the extent that science is successful in 'curing' doubt, it's because it tracks the real state of the world; and I argue that Peirce himself – his pragmatist narrative notwithstanding – is implicitly committed to this view as well.

A Rights-Based Utopia?

Adam Etinson

In the epilogue to his recent revisionist history of human rights, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Samuel Moyn considers the complex pressures exerted on the modern idea of human rights in light of its utopian status. One of these pressures, according to Moyn, consists in the 'burden of politics', that is, the need for human rights to represent a bona fide political programme of their own and not just 'a set of minimal constraints on responsible politics'. In this essay review, I reflect on an opposite problem: the complex pressures exerted upon our utopian imagination in light of its habitual association with the modern idea of human rights. In particular, I illustrate the impoverishing effect that a preoccupation with *rights* can have on our utopian ideals. These reflections form the basis for my argument that, far from aiming as Moyn does to preserve the utopian status of the idea of human rights, we ought to wrest utopian thought free from any dominating preoccupation with rights.

Characteristics of Bullying, Victim Behaviour and the Whole-School Policy
Catherine Chisholm

Dealing with bullying, either as a participant or a bystander, is unfortunately a common aspect of school life for many adolescents. This article examines the complex nature of bullying in terms of the difficulty of defining it due to the differing interpretations of what constitutes it. The characteristics of bullying and victim behaviour are explored, along with the effects of bullying upon the individuals involved, the school community and the possible effects upon both bullies and victims in later life. The need for a whole-school anti-bullying policy is also considered. With bullying behaviour impacting upon the whole-school community and environment in a number of ways, arriving at a shared understanding of exactly what constitutes bullying in each incidence is vital in maintaining a consistent approach toward bullying behaviour and thus ensuring the success of intervention work.

'Unsex Me Here': Intertwining Characteristics of Queer and Straight Composers
Rachel Becker

Discussions of sexuality as it surfaces in musical works or relates to a composer's style have become popular in musicology. In this paper, I argue that the effects of sexuality on musical composition are often overemphasized by academics, critics, and musicians. I provide background information on the ways in which critics and academics have discussed the relationship between sexuality and music, and on the loaded language that often makes its way into these discussions. I then examine two pairs of composers – Samuel Barber and Howard Hanson, and Aaron Copland and Roy Harris – and look at the ways in which musical characteristics cross lines of sexuality. The goal of this paper is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the reception of these composers and works, but to consider the ways in which divisions between composers have been emphasized because of the place of sexuality within society.

Testing the Grey Matter: Neuroscience and the Pursuit of the Unknown
Ruth Faram

Recent advances in brain research have led to a dramatic increase in the visibility of Neuroscience. The rapid translation of laboratory research to applied clinical therapy has allowed for the treatment of some devastating neurological disorders, something that did not seem possible even twenty-five years ago. Recent interest in the expanding field of Neuroscience has lead to many groundbreaking

discoveries. Here I summarise two of these – Neuronal Plasticity and Adult Neurogenesis. I discuss these in relation to fundamental research, which is the most basic, 'pure' research, often focused at a cellular level, which may not initially have any direct commercial benefits. I attempt to highlight the importance of such fundamental knowledge and suggest why it will remain the backbone of all scientific research, despite any advances made at a clinical level. I briefly describe the area of Neuroscience that I am currently studying, which engages several cellular and molecular components, in an attempt to share not only my enthusiasm for the brain, but also to highlight the significance of any fundamental research from a practical perspective.

Romance: A Gendered Genre
    Kira Rose

This paper explores gendered narratives in A.S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*. While Byatt does not see herself as a 'feminist' writer, her fiction speaks to her preoccupation with the complexities of women's lives. In the first part of this paper, I consider how Byatt's Victorian poetess Christabel LaMotte contends with and reaffirms romance's expectations, arguing that LaMotte stands in for the historical Poetess figure and her tenuous relationship to femininity and creativity. I go on to demonstrate how LaMotte's identification with the mythic Fairy Melusine, and her failed attempt to write an epic poem, reinforce LaMotte as the re-embodiment of the perpetually displaced Poetess.

Can science tell us what's objectively true?

Brian Earp[*]

Department of Experimental Psychology

Can science tell us what's objectively true? Or is it merely a clever way to cure doubt – to give us something to believe in, whether it's true or not? In this essay, I look at the pragmatist account of science expounded by Charles Sanders Peirce in his 1877 essay, 'The Fixation of Belief'. Against Peirce, I argue that science does not come naturally to our species, nor does the doubting open-mindedness upon which its practice relies. To the extent that science is successful in 'curing' doubt, it's because it tracks the real state of the world; and I argue that Peirce himself – his pragmatist narrative notwithstanding – is implicitly committed to this view as well.

Can science tell us what's objectively true? Or is it merely a clever way to cure doubt – to give us something to believe in, whether it's true or not? In this essay, I'll look at a provocative answer to this question given by the late 19th century American scientist, mathematician, logician, and philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce. But before delving into this eminent thinker's view – and in the interest of full disclosure – let me begin by telling you what your present humble writer used to think. *I* used to think that science was purely objective, a failsafe machine for churning out facts and converting foggy ignorance to sober knowledge. Scientists, I thought, were a special breed of truth-discoverers – a bit like superheroes, actually, only much, much nerdier. Removed from commonplace concerns and exempt from ordinary human foibles, their pronouncements were gospel.

That was before I trained as a scientist. And skipping to the punch line now: I was naïve. Even if the scientific method, or some ideal conception of it, could justify this dreamy-eyed confidence, I've come to learn that the *practice* of science deserves a much more cynical look. Scientists, it turns out, are humans too. They

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[*]Email: brian.earp@psy.ox.ac.uk

have reputations to defend, insecurities to navigate, and careers to make. Karl Popper, the famous 20th century philosopher of science, had it wrong: scientists don't abandon their favoured theories or years-long research programs the instant a contrary datum rears its ugly head. Studies that don't work are run again; equipment is tinkered with or replaced; research assistants are fired. Science can be a messy business.

To be fair to Popper, though he doesn't need my charity, his writings on the topic had more to do with the *logic* of scientific discovery than with its actual practice. Accordingly, if someone wanted to mount a defense of science, her best bet might be to appeal to some account of its 'ideal' form, citing, perhaps, a privileged relationship to truth. *Insofar as it's done right*, our imagined apologist might say, science deserves our allegiance because it transcends subjective belief – and the fallible groping of common sense – and latches on in some systematic way to ultimate reality. If we are committed to reason, then we should be compelled by science.

This is where Charles Peirce – polymath and founder of the school of thought known as pragmatism – would disagree. In an 1877 essay, 'The Fixation of Belief', he tries to champion the scientific method *without* appealing to reason, rationality, or objective truth. Instead (and this is what pragmatism is all about), he argues that science is more like a nifty trick – a practical emollient for the irritation of doubt that happens to trump other prescriptions. Got uncertainty? Try science. Not for any theoretic, metaphysical, or transcendent reason, mind you – but on pragmatic grounds alone. *It just works*.

But that may be too easy. First, we might want to ask: *does* science 'work' to cure uncertainty in the way Peirce suggests? And if it does, *why*? If you're like me, you might not be convinced that the scientific method is in fact the surest way to conquer doubt – at least for certain individuals, probably some whole groups, and maybe even the entire species. I'll explain what I mean later on. Second, to the extent that science *is* a good way to settle belief, I think it's for less 'pragmatic' a reason than Peirce contends. In fact, I want to convince you that Peirce *himself* must have been committed to an 'objective' view of science – one which says that its methods are sensitive to the real state of the world, and therefore hit upon truth more reliably than alternatives. It is this special link to objective reality – and not some accident of our animal psychologies – that compels, insofar as it does, the calm stableness of belief.

But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. We should start with Peirce's own view, in his own terms. How does he begin his argument? The answer is: at the very beginning – with a definition of our species. A human, Peirce writes, is a 'logical animal' – a belief-bearing beast, if you will – that is defined by its ability

to reason, but whose access to mind-independent reality is obscure at best. Why is that?

As 'animals' we are products of natural selection – that much is uncontroversial. But what about the 'logical' part – what about our reasoning minds? To be sure, at least *some* of our beliefs (and belief-forming systems generally) must track the actual state of world. If not, we'd have been dumped by now into evolution's scrap pile. (To illustrate: if you sincerely believe that jumping off this cliff won't threaten your survival – and you're still a virgin, it has to be premised – you can be sure that the next generation will be spared your genes.) That said, insofar as it is 'of more advantage to the animal to have his mind filled with pleasing and encouraging visions' – irrespective of their ultimate veracity – then 'natural selection might occasion a fallacious tendency of thought' (10a).[1]

For Peirce, then, it's a tricky issue to sort out the ultimate relationship of our human reasoning to the world's reality – that is, between our beliefs and actual fact. We are probably hit or miss. So for Peirce a different question arises, namely, How *in fact* do we reason? When and why do we engage in processes of rational inquiry, and under what conditions do we stop?

'The irritation of doubt,' Peirce writes, 'causes a struggle to attain a state of belief' (13a, emphasis added). That's the whole idea. Deep down, we want nothing more than to get from A to B – or, in this case, from 'd' to 'b'. Peirce means that it is characteristic of our nature as cogitating critters to doubt, to feel that doubt as an itch, and to scratch our way through inquiry to the 'calm and satisfactory' state of belief. Or as he puts it elsewhere, 'the production of belief is the sole function of thought' (30b). Notice that Peirce isn't saying that the production of *true* belief is the sole function of thought, but rather belief full stop. And while we do happen to *think* that our beliefs are true, our real goal, Peirce insists, is the mere 'settlement of opinion' – the cessation of doubt (14a).

(On this conception, it seems, doubt and belief are at opposite ends of a gradient pole: the less doubt you have, the more belief you have, and vice versa. So that there's no confusion, we will be using Peirce's notion of these terms throughout what follows.)

Now, if this really is our goal – to get from 'd' to 'b' – then we should be interested to know the best doubt-scratching method available, *holding truth aside*. Peirce proposes four methods, but the two most relevant to my argument here are what he calls 'the method of tenacity', which I'll explain in a moment, and then our main topic, the scientific method. The method of tenacity is that

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[1]Quotes are from (a) Peirce, C.S. (1997). 'The Fixation of Belief' in *Pragmatism: A Reader*, edited by Louis Menand, New York: Vintage Books, or (b) 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear' in the same volume. My citation convention for this article will be in-text: ([page number][a/b]).

way of getting rid of doubt according to which a person clings to her beliefs, whatever they are, in the face of any and all contradictory information. The scientific method, on the other hand, is the one we know and love: it involves the careful testing of hypotheses against evidence, and the relinquishment of ideas that can't withstand empirical scrutiny.

How do these two methods fare in relieving doubt? The method of tenacity, Peirce would have us believe, can be effective in some eras and for some people, but ultimately suffers from a finite shelf life. Eventually – given enough time, and enough interpersonal and intercultural exchange – this method must dissolve under the corrosive sting of a single powerful impulse, thereby allowing doubt to seep back in. But what is this impulse? Peirce asks us first to consider the myriad of mutually exclusive beliefs existing between persons, cultures, and nations, and across historical boundaries of time. Faced with this tangle of contradictions, Peirce contends, certain individuals 'will find that other men think differently from [them] … that [the others'] opinions are quite as good as [their] own, and this will shake [their] confidence in [their beliefs]' (16a). Elsewhere Peirce describes the impulse in this way:

> … in the most priest-ridden states some individuals will be found who are raised above that condition. These men possess a wider sort of social feeling; they see that men in other countries and in other ages have held to very different beliefs from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe; and they cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have, and of their having been surrounded with the manners and associations they have, that has caused them to believe as they do and not far differently. And their candor cannot resist the reflection that there is no reason to rate their own views at a higher value than those of other nations and other centuries; and this gives rise to doubts in their minds. (18-19a, emphasis added)

Here I want to make my first real protest, though I have to qualify it in advance by confessing that this passage strikes me as lovely. It describes a way of thinking I admire, and even aspire to. In addition, I think there is good evidence that this 'social impulse' exists, and I reckon Peirce has captured both its essence and effect. But here's the rub: it may be a rarer phenomenon in our species than can meet the demands of his argument. I say this because Peirce's whole discussion rests on his conception of *human nature*. He wants to pin down the 'logical' and the 'animal' deep within in us, spell out their interrelations, and then test his various doubt-remedies against the final picture. So the question becomes,

How wide is that segment of our species through which the 'social impulse' truly and vitally flows? If it's small enough, we may have to think of such individuals as exceptional, rather than as signposts to human nature, which could undermine Peirce's story.

Peirce of course is optimistic: the impulse is 'too strong in man to be suppressed', he writes, 'without danger of destroying the human species' (16a). For my part, I'm not so sure. In the first place, there is simply no getting around the existence of a huge number of people who fulfill one of two conditions: either they never, or rarely, examine the contentious beliefs of other people, places, or times; or, if they do, they dismiss those rankling beliefs (by whatever means, and through whatever degree of effort) as wrong. Furthermore, I'm inclined to think that such people – who practice some form of Peirce's 'method of tenacity' – make up the greater part of our species, and likely the far greater part. And what's really crucial to think about is this. Even among those better souls whose 'candor' (to recycle Peirce's term) really does compel them to doubt their own beliefs – How much doubt? With respect to which beliefs? Important ones or trivial ones? Many or few?

My implied answers are easy to guess, but I'll make them explicit here. Those who 'cannot help' but consider the largely accidental nature of their belief-origins – whether such people are common or scarce – do not throw out their beliefs whole hog, indiscriminately. Nor can they start over and doubt everything: cognitive resources are limited, and time is short. Meanwhile, core beliefs almost certainly remain intact – and indeed may never feel the spotlight-glare of Peirce's 'wider' social impulse in the first place. I do agree with Peirce that, insofar as we are not hermits, we may certainly 'influence each other's opinions' (16a) – but I cannot bring myself to think that this influence compels so high a level of 'candor' as Peirce describes except in rare cases.

Of course, I can surmise all day. It's my hunch against Peirce's hunch, and surely you have a hunch as well. And yet the answers to these questions are empirical in nature – they must be found out by looking. So for now, let's assume for the sake of argument that I am right and that the members of this 'social impulse' class – that is, those people who are legitimately moved to deep self-scepticism by a 'wider social feeling' – are relatively few. Then all I am saying is that the scientific method may not fare so well, on *pragmatic* grounds, as Peirce proposes. For these select individuals it may work (if we go along with Peirce's thesis), but what about the rest of us? Indeed, for many – *too* many, in my view, for Peirce to be convincing – science is either completely flummoxing or mysterious and even scary. Those with the nerve to pursue science professionally must submit to years of intense training to become competent in its practice, while those who

suffer from 'scientific illiteracy' – if the reports are right – are so great in number that we can hardly be asked to believe that human nature and science sing in harmony. *Science* calm our doubts? But science doesn't come to us naturally in the least; it comes with a fight.

Obviously this is a bold claim. Can I get away with it? I think so; I'm not the first to make it. But you won't be convinced unless I take some time to clear up what I mean – and what Peirce means – by 'science'. Here is why. Suppose that by 'science' Peirce means something like 'the application of logical thinking to empirical matters'. And suppose that such a thing really does come naturally to human beings. Now suppose that what *I* mean by 'science' – following my word choice in the last paragraph – is something more along the lines of 'professional' science in its modern form, a very different notion. Then I'd be making the classic mistake of attacking a scarecrow, criticizing a complex, contemporary notion of science that Peirce himself never had in mind. So let me set myself a challenge. I will define science in the broadest, simplest terms I can imagine – as something in the vicinity of 'fact-sensitive reasoning' – and try to show that such a thing, even so generously construed, may be nevertheless at odds with our species' inmost nature. And I'll use Peirce's own words to do it.

'Few persons care to study logic,' Peirce writes at the beginning of his essay, 'because everybody conceives himself to be proficient enough in the art of reasoning already.' Yet despite this fact, 'we come to the full possession of our power of drawing inferences, the *last* of all our faculties; for it is not so much a natural gift as a long and difficult art' (7a, emphasis added). My purpose in giving this quote is not to suggest that all, or even most, human beings are bad at thinking clearly – this is obviously not the case. Instead I want to show that Peirce himself seems to grant that the sort of systematic, evidence-based reasoning upon which the scientific method is built may not be the natural default of our primate brains. Indeed, I'm making a point not so much about the actual capacities of our species, but about the internal tension in Peirce's view, that is, between his own optimism about the doubt-relieving ability of science, on the one hand, and his pessimism about the naturalness of logic, on the other. Consider the following as well. Speaking about science directly, Peirce invokes a patently high standard – higher far than the provisional 'simple' definition I've just given. In doing so, he criticizes even Francis Bacon – the oft-hailed 'father' of the scientific method – for the primitiveness and inadequacy of his approach, saying, 'every work of science great enough to be well remembered for a few generations affords some exemplification of the defective state of the art of reasoning of the time when it was written; and each chief step in science has been a lesson in logic' (8a).

If 'mere' reasoning is not, as Peirce himself puts it, 'a natural gift' – how

much less so is *science* likely to be, however it is defined? And here is the implication for Peirce's view. He has tried to defend the scientific method by saying it's the most successful way, given our peculiar logical-animal natures, to cure doubt and fix belief. But then his own arguments seem to put the emphasis too heavily on the 'animal' side of the equation. Indeed, if what I've been going on about is correct – namely that science grates on human nature, and that the 'wider social impulse' is felt by few, and feebly – then Peirce can't be right, and we'd have no independent reason to endorse the scientific method over and above other means of settling opinion. 'It just works' is a bad argument if it doesn't work.

So where do we stand? Let's say we hold to this analysis and decide that Peirce has missed the mark. Let's say he's wrong about human nature. Do we have to give up on science, then, and class it no better than alternative routes to belief? Is there really nothing that sets it apart? You can guess that my answer is 'no'. But so too, I think, is Peirce's – despite his superficially pragmatist narrative. Science *is* better than alternative routes to belief because the path it charts wends toward truth.

So say I. But I want to argue that Peirce too, deep-down, regards science as truth-sensitive in this way – connected to objective reality – and that it is *this* fact which gives it its special potency in doing away with doubt. Peirce understands that we humans care about truth, and he thinks that science can deliver it best.

What is my evidence for this view? Start with this. On the way to explaining why science-based beliefs alone can withstand the seeping erosion of the social impulse, Peirce writes: 'it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be caused by nothing human, but by some *external permanency* – by something upon which our thinking has no effect' (20-21a, emphasis added). What external permanency can he mean, if not a stable state of affairs – a real world – to which science has special access? Indeed, shortly after the quote I've just given, Peirce spells out, and actually seems to endorse, the keystone hypothesis of the scientific worldview: 'There are real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those realities affect our senses according to regular laws, and . . . we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are' (21a). Finally, he writes that if 'a man . . . wishes his opinions to coincide with [fact], [it will be] the prerogative of [science]' to produce the desired effect (24a). This appears to be scientific realism plain as day. How can Peirce defend such a view in the course of an otherwise insistent pragmatism?

To answer this, let's give Peirce's train of thought another look. Doubt, he says, arises from the irritating friction of two (or more) incompatible propositions. But then someone who doubts (he continues) must believe that there is some *one*

state of affairs against which the competing propositions could be decided – in other words, an external, objective reality. Now, we all doubt; so we must all believe in an external, objective reality. So we are all by nature realists. The scientific method – Peirce then suggests – is the sole contender that posits an external reality or objective truth, so it is the only one that can calm the friction of our doubt.

There are a number of ways to take issue with the above line of reasoning, but it would be a distraction to pursue them here. Let me be careful. Regardless of whether Peirce's argument is sound, he is *not* (strictly) saying that the central tenet of science – realism – is *true*. That would be decidedly un-pragmatic. Instead he is saying that it happens to be the case that we *believe* it to be true, and cannot help ourselves. That *Peirce himself* believes it along with the rest of us, and that this belief bolsters his commitment to science, I still have to show. But let's pause here to consider in more detail Peirce's reference to folk realism, in order to assess its role in his broader argument.

This is the claim: we are most of us naïve realists. That much is probably uncontroversial. Indeed, a quick humanity-wide Gallup poll would certainly reveal an overwhelming bias toward belief in some version of external reality. But it's a long way around the isthmus from this observation to Peirce's main point, namely that science is the surest practical way to conquer doubt. After all, I may believe, along with just about everyone else, in the existence of an objective, mind-independent reality – *without* necessarily endorsing the scientific method for everyday belief-formation, or finding it particularly compelling in general. Expert disciples of the method of tenacity, for instance, are very likely realists. They think that the world exists. They think that their own beliefs about the world are objectively true. And they think that the competing beliefs of other people are objectively false. So if what I said earlier is correct – namely that most people practice some form of this tenacious method – then Peirce would still be wrong to say that the scientific one triumphs on *pragmatic* grounds. To put it another way, since both the method of tenacity and the scientific method are compatible with everyday, man-on-the-street realism, belief in an external world is poor evidence for the exclusive power of science to relieve doubt.

Why, then, is Peirce so loyal to the scientific method? I think – if I may resort at this point to something halfway between textual analysis and psychoanalytic speculation – that it's because Peirce himself is a scientist. He is enamored with science, and thinks you should be too. 'All the followers of science', he writes, 'are fully persuaded that [its methods] will give one certain solution to every question to which it can be applied' (44b):

> Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a foreordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. (45b)

Here is a man in love. Peirce is expressing in hushed, adoring phrases that same reverence for science which I once knew myself. But 'most of us ... are naturally more sanguine and hopeful than logic would justify' (10a) – and Peirce's own optimism may be a case in point. His argument for the practical grounding and palliative effects of science, as well as our species' open-minded willingness to doubt, seems to groan under the weight of so much counter-evidence: provincialism, tribalism, ideological indoctrination, and partisan hollering, just to start. The virtuous social impulse that he credits to our species' inmost nature, if it ever was essential, may now be vestigial at best. And science, I've claimed, is more bewildering than bewitching.

But Peirce could still be right in the long-run, for he tunes his optimism to the arc of infinity. 'Our perversity', he writes, 'may indefinitely postpone the settlement of opinion; it might even conceivably cause an arbitrary proposition to be universally accepted as long as the human race should last. Yet even that would not change the nature of [a true] belief, which alone could be the result of investigation carried sufficiently far; and if, after the extinction of our race, another should arise with faculties and disposition for investigation, that true opinion must be the one which they would ultimately come to' (45b).

This is realism. Even for Peirce, that is, some one truth exists. The world really is a certain way – whatever that way may be; and though it may take us an infinity to see it, it is out there nonetheless. Furthermore, science, Peirce believes, is the only vehicle capable of making the trip. Given the evidence I've just surveyed, then, we must come to the following conclusion regarding our question about science and reality. Even for the father of pragmatism the answer is *yes*. Science can – and can exclusively – tell us what is really true about our world.

A Rights-Based Utopia?

Adam Etinson*

Philosophy Faculty

In the epilogue to his recent revisionist history of human rights, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Samuel Moyn considers the complex pressures exerted on the modern idea of human rights in light of its utopian status. One of these pressures, according to Moyn, consists in the 'burden of politics', that is, the need for human rights to represent a bona fide political programme of their own and not just 'a set of minimal constraints on responsible politics'. In this essay review, I reflect on an opposite problem: the complex pressures exerted upon our utopian imagination in light of its habitual association with the modern idea of human rights. In particular, I illustrate the impoverishing effect that a preoccupation with *rights* can have on our utopian ideals. These reflections form the basis for my argument that, far from aiming as Moyn does to preserve the utopian status of the idea of human rights, we ought to wrest utopian thought free from any dominating preoccupation with rights.

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.
> – Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1895)

   When we think long and hard enough about what an ideal world would look like – obviously, a world rather different from our own – it is striking to notice how quickly human rights enter the picture. So many of the staples of any plausible

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*Email: adam.etinson@new.ox.ac.uk

utopia are projects that have now been taken up in the name of human rights: the global relief of suffering; the protection and restoration of human dignity; the provision of equal economic and social opportunities to all; the purging of corruption and dishonesty from politics; the achievement of world peace; freedom from crime, fear, alienation, and torture; harmony with the planet, its ecosystems, and species; loving relationships, success, spiritual fulfilment, and of course affordable unrestricted internet access for all.[1]   All of these admirable goals have somehow become bound up with the idea of human rights as we commonly understand it today.

What is the significance of this imaginative entanglement – that is, the entanglement of human rights, on the one hand, with utopia, on the other? Well, for one, it means that many of our traditional utopian aspirations (peace, prosperity, and general well-being have long been fashionable concepts) have found a natural home in the modern idea of human rights. This has the effect of exerting an outward pressure on such rights to incorporate more and more of what we deem good. For instance, Article 22 of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* affirms a human right to 'national and international peace and security'. That there is a legally posited human right to *world peace* is good evidence that such rights have become placeholders for almost any worthy cause whatsoever.

On the other hand, just as rights have become more utopian, the inverse is also true. The Enlightenment idea of human rights – and, with it, the far older notion of a *right* – has found a secure home in our modern utopian imagination. The effect that this has had on our utopian ideals is not entirely clear. At the very least, it seems unlikely that our vision of utopia is in some (parallel) sense pressured to *expand* as a result of its incorporation of human rights. It is not as if human rights bring with them some new concern that was hitherto neglected by our conceptions of utopia. Rather, it seems to me far more likely that our utopian imagination is in fact *restricted* by its preoccupation with rights (human or otherwise).

What I want to do in what follows is to try to clarify the nature of this restriction, and to highlight some of its dangers. I want to do this, moreover, in dialogue with the views of an author who seems unaware of both. Towards the end of his fascinating new book on the history of human rights, *The Last Utopia*, Samuel Moyn, a historian at Columbia University, wonders whether human rights will be able to continue carrying the burden of their utopian status

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[1]On this last note, see: *Human Rights and the Internet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), edited by Steven Hick, Edward F. Halpin, and Eric Hoskins.

through the coming centuries or even decades.[2] Moyn is worried about the fate of human rights when they are conceived as a utopian project. But he never stops to consider the fate of utopia when it is conceived as a rights-based ideal. Nor does he consider how our utopian imagination, too, carries a burden in light of its connection with human rights. It is this missing element of Moyn's analysis that I want to consider in what follows.

One interesting thing to note about the contemporary hold that human rights have on our social and political imagination is how recent a phenomenon this is. The more or less standard story we're told about human rights is that (after a lengthy post-Enlightenment slumber) these rights recaptured the global imagination in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and, in particular, the Holocaust. Most importantly, widespread and acute postwar revulsion to Nazi brutality culminated in the international signing of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, so the story goes, we've witnessed the gradual dissemination of the moral wisdom embodied in that document: for instance, in the form of a growing affirmation of the moral importance of human rights across the globe, and in the form of the progressive introduction of human rights into domestic and international law.[3]

This familiar narrative is fiercely challenged by Moyn in his recent book. According to Moyn, the linearity of the history of human rights has been grossly overestimated. If we take care not to succumb to the temptations of hindsight, he argues, at least two discontinuities in that history become apparent. Firstly, the twentieth-century internationalist idea of human rights bears little resemblance to its Enlightenment or pre-modern counterpart; while the former pretends to limit national sovereignty by making all governments answerable to certain universal standards of conduct, the latter had no such pretension. Secondly, Moyn goes to great lengths to show that even the twentieth-century history of human rights itself is far from linear. Contrary to popular belief, the immediate global reverberations created by the Universal Declaration were relatively modest, and the full impact of the Holocaust only became clear later on. In fact, it was not until the mid-to late 1970s, Moyn argues, that a fortuitous confluence of factors created an environment in which human rights could finally emerge as a genuinely viable social cause.

Before the 1970s, human rights were off the ideological and moral map, so to speak. Eclipsed by what were until then far more dominant social movements,

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[2]Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[3]For a history of this general form, see: Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001).

it was only after disenchantment with revolutionary communism, nationalistic anti-colonialism, and the Vietnam War finally began to set in during the 1960s and 1970s that human rights first emerged as a plausible ideological alternative. In fact, Moyn argues that it was precisely because human rights were viewed as ideologically and politically neutral – accommodating both communism and nationalism on the one hand, and capitalism and individualism on the other – that human rights then emerged as the safe (or safest) ideological bet. Most importantly, human rights were innocent of the aggressive utopianism that brought their alternatives to ruin. They did not require a commitment to manifestly violent processes of political and social upheaval in the way that communism and anti-colonialism did. Nor were they incompatible with communism in a way that would demand foreign interventions like the Vietnamese and Korean wars. Human rights found success in representing a sober-minded, anti-political, anti-revolutionary, anti-utopian utopia, at the right historical moment. In this sense, they represent a kind of *last utopia* – that is, a realistic or realizable one (hence the provocative title of Moyn's book).

Aside from its historical interest, Moyn's revisionist thesis harbours an important lesson. Human rights are today so firmly entrenched in our moral landscape that it is almost impossible for us to imagine what an alternative landscape would look like. And yet, only forty years ago the landscape was different; human rights did not represent the self-evident social cause that they do today. Moreover, if Moyn is right, the confluence of factors that account for this change was a product of historical chance: growing dissent and oppression within the USSR; protracted revolutionary turmoil in South America; anti-colonialist debacles in Africa; a destructive war against communism in Vietnam; and Jimmy Carter's spontaneous attempt (in his 1977 commencement speech given at Notre Dame University) to reclaim American moral integrity via a commitment to human rights as a central foreign policy imperative. The fragility of our moral world, its dependence upon such seemingly random events of history, is something that should give us pause. It should compel us to adopt a more reflective attitude towards our deepest moral convictions. And in particular, it should compel us to be more sensitive and alert to the weaknesses, blind spots, and darker underbelly of the moral ideas that history hands to us and that we unquestioningly accept.

In his epilogue, Moyn expresses concern that, having come to play the role of a substitute for now-defunct utopian projects, human rights may implode under the enormous pressure being heaped upon them. One of those pressures is what Moyn calls the 'burden of politics' (p. 226). Standing as a substitute for previous

grand political visions, there is pressure on human rights to present a bona fide political programme of their own, and not merely 'a set of minimal constraints on responsible politics'. This parallels a point I made earlier that, as a vessel for utopian aspirations, human rights are forced to incorporate more and more of what we deem good. In this case, Moyn's worry is that, because the original utopian appeal of human rights consisted precisely in their modest, ideologically neutral, and real world character, there is a serious question of whether they can survive the denaturing process of politicization. Moyn's implicit suggestion is that, in order to preserve their status as the true *last utopia*, human rights must narrowly call our attention to 'a few core values that demand protection', thereby making room for 'new and other political visions that have yet to be fully outlined'.

I agree with Moyn that human rights should be seen as offering something less than a complete political program. It is precisely when we try to give them real institutional substance – say, by affirming a human right to representative democracy – that human rights begin to lose their aura of universality and descend into partisanship. This is perhaps the main reason why both the Universal Declaration and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) fall short of declaring a human right to 'democracy' as such. The avoidance of political partisanship, however, need not be a sign of mere moral infirmity or political compromise, let alone an attempt to preserve the utopian status of human rights. It is better understood as born from the recognition that there is more than one way to satisfy human rights at an institutional level. Democracy has gained significant momentum over the course of the last century (even dictators feel the need to pay tribute to it by holding rigged elections), and the more widespread democratic governance becomes, the less partisan the idea of a human right to democracy will be. Nevertheless, it will always be true that there are and have been other social forms, other non-democratic ways of organizing human society, in which people have been able to live perfectly decent and dignified lives. It wouldn't make a great deal of sense, for instance, to ascribe a human right to democracy to members of isolated tribes in the Amazon forest. Considered as truly isolated – and not, say, as citizens of Brazil – it seems more apt to say that the members of such tribes have a (more abstract) right to political participation, the specific implications of which will vary from context to context.

Another reason to resist the temptation to fully politicize human rights is that, after all, they are only *rights*. Normally understood, rights correlate with duties – duties assigned either to individuals or institutions, or both. The relevant duty might be to provide an individual with some good or service, or to refrain from mistreating an individual in certain ways. In either case, what is at issue are certain obligations that one agent owes to another, obligations strong enough to qualify

as a matter of 'right', such as 'affordable access to higher education is not just a good thing, it is our *right*', 'ample paid paternity leave is his right', 'freedom from torture is a human right', and so on. As such, rights are an extremely important or central part of our moral and political vocabulary; they structure our efforts to make others answerable to crucial interests, concerns, and vulnerabilities that we have as citizens and human beings. Yet, so much of what is important in politics escapes the purview of rights.

Societies typically coalesce around a way of life, which is oriented by certain basic values. These values – like the values of fairness and equality – can affect our thinking about the set of rights we all possess, but such values can also affect our judgment about non rights-related questions. For instance, a society will tend to endorse certain standards of good conduct towards strangers that have nothing to do with rights, as well as standards of loyalty and caring towards friends and family that are similarly non rights-related. Those standards and values can have a momentous impact on what political life – essentially, our life as lived *together* – is like. They affect, for instance, what it's like to travel on trains, to walk on the street, to buy groceries, or to do almost anything. Moreover, a society's basic values address a host of questions that are social and personal at the same time: questions about virtue (for example, what sort of person should I become?), about personal fulfillment (for example, what sort of life would I find satisfying?), and about daily life (for example, how should I spend my free time today?). Much of what we learn from society consists in answers to intimate questions like these. And the social mechanisms of shame and esteem are ways of compelling us to answer such questions in the same way as everyone else. Despite its rhetorical emphasis on freedom (that is, do what you want within the limits of everyone's rights), American society is heavily oriented not only by consumerist attitudes and practices but also by the romantic archetype of the self-made man.[4] All this is to say that a comprehensive political vision simply cannot be formulated within the terms of rights alone, whether these are the rights of citizens or those of all human beings. Some consideration must also be given to a society's basic values and to the way(s) of life that they promote.

The same is true, to an even greater extent, of a utopian social ideal. Moyn's epilogue is concerned with the ability of human rights to continue to carry the burden of representing the *last utopia*. In particular, he's concerned with the complex stresses that the status of utopia places on such rights. But what about

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[4]The latter is surprising given the unusually low rates of social mobility in the United States as compared to other high-income nations See: Tom Hertz, *Understanding Social Mobility in America* (2006). Published online at: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/04/b1579981.html

the burden carried by the other participant in this relationship? What about the stresses exerted upon the utopian imagination by virtue of its habitual association with human rights? Here, I think, human rights have an impoverishing flip side. Of course it is true that any plausible social ideal would respect the human rights of its members, and that a fully just world would, among other things, protect and promote the human rights of all persons. But this only begins to scratch the surface. For a genuine utopia would be a world in which we not only find our rights and the rights of others respected, but also find ourselves *living well* both individually and collectively. That is to say, it would be a world in which the quality and satisfaction of our social interactions were high, in which we as individuals and society as a whole were productive in a variety of important ways, in which we benefitted from that productivity, and in which we were able to properly look after not only others but, critically, ourselves. Much of the utopian appeal of Marxist humanism lay in its vivid description of what such a world would be like. But such a world cannot be depicted exclusively in the language of rights.

Perhaps the best way to put the point is this. A utopia has to be more than just a world in which we give others what we owe to them and they give us what they owe to us, as a matter of *right*. In addition to being a world of giving, abstaining, and receiving (that is, a world defined by rights), a utopia also has to be a world in which we live a good life. This means, among other things, knowing how to make *proper use* of our rights-based entitlements. Being free to choose (and to pursue) a good life is important, but equally important is knowing how to make the *right choice* when that opportunity is presented to us. To make that choice, we need something more than just rights; we need knowledge or guidance. And so rights or entitlements can only help us live a good life up to a certain point. For instance, rights to education or to the free access of information can help us make good use of our rights to employment, liberty, and equal opportunity by increasing our knowledge of available options. But what we ultimately do with our social entitlements is up to us, and the choices that we make will either bring us closer to the good life or further away from it. This is why broader questions of value are so important to the description of a utopia. Would a utopian society educate us in the ways of consumerism and material culture? Or would it educate us in the ways of Buddhist transcendentalism, with the aim of facilitating a society-wide state of nirvana? Regardless, the point is that a utopia cannot merely be a world of individual rights or entitlements. It must also be a social world that orients us towards the good, towards human flourishing, or towards *making the most* of our rights.

The fact that human rights have become the dominant ideology of our time

has had the unfortunate effect, I think, of making us lose sight of this greater role that society can and does play in our lives. Instead of striving to cultivate human virtue or excellence in all its forms (athletic, intellectual, moral, artistic, and so on), we think it's good enough for society to observe and enforce certain minimum constraints on action and politics. Well, perhaps this is an exaggeration. Not all of us are so complacent. Many of us do think that society is (and should be) in the business of promoting human virtue. But it is precisely this great expectation that is threatened by making politics and, even worse, *utopia* all about rights. For, once we have come to see human rights as not only necessary standards of politics but also as the embodiment of utopia – that is, as describing the best of all possible worlds – we have in effect given up on the idea that there is anything other than rights that is worth collectively striving for. That is a deeply cynical and ultimately dangerous form of complacency.

Has this complacency already taken hold? One indication that it has is the imaginative poverty of our popular culture. These days, we rarely if ever use art to dream of alternative, better, or greater forms of human life. We find little allure in contemplating the future, or the advancements that we may achieve in times to come. Television programming is dominated by 'reality TV', with perhaps the occasional good drama. And with the exception of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, there are no genuinely forward-looking television programs that I can think of. Perhaps this has nothing to do with human rights. Perhaps it has more to do with what makes good entertainment. Or, perhaps it is a symptom of the overwhelming pessimism of our times.

But perhaps it is also owing to the deep complacency alluded to above, a complacency that is evident in the catapulting of the bare-boned idea of human *rights* to the status of a (or more accurately, *the*) utopian social ideal. Such complacency is not only dangerous – because it narrows our sense of what we can imagine and strive for – it is also unwarranted. We can and should strive for more than just rights; we can and should expect more than just guarantees of rights from society, from politicians, and from others. Our human betterment, I believe, even *depends* on us expecting and demanding more. And so, rather than worrying about how we might preserve the utopian status of human rights into the future, which is one of Moyn's concerns, we ought to worry about just the opposite: how to *rescue* utopia from the clutches of human rights. I hasten to insist that this need not involve denying the importance or centrality of human rights in morality and politics. What it requires is that we develop a richer framework of normative thought in which human rights, instead of being removed from centre stage, simply remain there in their proper place – as necessary entitlements, but not as utopia.

Characteristics of Bullying, Victim Behaviour and the Whole-School Policy

Catherine Chisholm*

Department of Education

Dealing with bullying, either as a participant or a bystander, is unfortunately a common aspect of school life for many adolescents. This article examines the complex nature of bullying in terms of the difficulty of defining it due to the differing interpretations of what constitutes it. The characteristics of bullying and victim behaviour are explored, along with the effects of bullying upon the individuals involved, the school community and the possible effects upon both bullies and victims in later life. The need for a whole-school anti-bullying policy is also considered. With bullying behaviour impacting upon the whole school community and environment in a number of ways, arriving at a shared understanding of exactly what constitutes bullying in each incidence is vital in maintaining a consistent approach toward bullying behaviour and thus ensuring the success of intervention work.

Introduction

Being confronted with bullying, either as a participant or a spectator, is unfortunately a common part of everyday life at school for many adolescents [10]. The problem of school bullying has received much attention since widespread interest in the area was initiated by Olweus' influential work in Scandinavia (1978, 1993) which fuelled research internationally [16]. The results of the first systematic bullying research were published in 1973 under the title 'Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys'. Olweus' initial study looked deeply into the important, yet at the time often overlooked, problem of school students

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*Email: catherine.chisholm@new.ox.ac.uk

being harassed and attacked within the school environment. Furthermore, during 1983 three adolescent boys in Norway committed suicide as a consequence of severe bullying. This prompted the country's Ministry of Education to initiate a national campaign against bullying in schools. As a result, the first version of the 'Olweus Bullying Prevention Program' was developed. The initial Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was evaluated in a large-scale project involving 2500 students from 42 schools followed over a period of two and a half years.

Statistics showed after a two year analysis there had been [20]:

- Reductions of 50% or more in student reports of being bullied and bullying others. Peer and teacher ratings of bullying problems yielded roughly similar results.

- Marked reductions in student reports of general antisocial behaviour, such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy.

- Clear improvements in the classroom social climate, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and more positive attitudes toward schoolwork and school.

Owing to its success, the program was refined and further evaluated in five more large-scale projects in Norway. As the resultant statistics continued to show successful prevention of bullying in schools, they spurred an initiative by the Norwegian government in 2001 which implemented the 'Olweus Bullying Prevention Program' on a much larger scale across schools throughout Norway.

However, although such success has provided good insight into the positive effects of anti-bullying practices, bullying within schools remains a complex problem which receives a great deal of attention. Owing to the complex nature of bullying, it needs to be counteracted from several angles [10]. There should be no 'one size fits all' approach, as each case will present many differing elements, motives and consequences.

This article will give an overview of the research that has investigated the issue of bullying. In particular, the definitions of bullies and victims, the characteristics of bullying and victim behaviour, and reasons as to why students bully are explored and considered. Finally, the need for a whole-school anti-bullying policy is discussed.

Definitions of Bullying and Characteristics of Bullying Behaviour

For more than two decades, studies have revealed that a substantial proportion of pupils are regularly bullied by their peers in school [2, 19, 20]. Bullying behaviour

of all forms is considered to be unacceptable in any school environment, yet it is common throughout schools in the UK. Bullying has been defined as 'repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons' [21]. However, there have been many problems documented with creating such definitions [12, 21]. Since the problem of bullying was first given attention, one major concern among researchers has been agreeing on how to define it [10]. During recent years a definition coined by Olweus [20] which consists of three predominant criteria that characterise bullying behaviour has come to be used by several researchers [3, 10, 14]. The definition is as follows:

> A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.

This particular definition includes three significant components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behaviour that involves unwanted, negative actions.

2. Bullying involves a pattern of behaviour repeated over time.

3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Bullying can take on a wide range of forms [14, 20]. Generally, physical and verbal bullying are the two major categories characterised in research studies. For example, punching, pushing, holding, and hostile gesturing are considered physical bullying, whereas verbal bullying includes name-calling, teasing, taunting, silent treatment, manipulating friendship, humiliating, and threatening [14]. However, more recently, as the world has modernised, the 'traditional' sorts of bullying have adapted and evolved into a new form which is now described best as 'Cyber-bullying'. Cyber-bullying refers to bullying via electronic communication tools [13]. As the internet and online social networks continue to grow, so does cyber-bullying [5]. Cyber-bullying, just like 'traditional' verbal and physical bullying, also takes various forms, ranging from emails and mobile phones (texting and anonymous calls) to websites and social networks. For example, in the USA, a boy, using a photo-editing tool to paste a girl's face onto a pornographic photo, distributed the photo to his entire email list because he had a quarrel with the girl [14].

Further to this, research with secondary school students found that 20% of students had experienced bullying or threats via e-mail, internet chat-room or text message [18]. Bullying using text messaging was the most common of these three

forms of bullying, experienced by 14% of young people. Almost three quarters of young people who had been bullied by email, internet chat-room or text message said they knew the person who bullied or threatened them, while a quarter (26%) said it was done by a stranger [18]. Unlike face-to-face bullying, it has been documented that people often feel that 'cyberspace' is impersonal and thus, they are free to say whatever they want without needing to consider the impact of their actions. The latter, combined with the convenient anonymous nature of 'cyberspace', means that cyber-bullying can easily escalate so that an individual is victimised and the bully can often be left unidentified [13].

With this in mind, the 'Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Questionnaire' encompasses nine criteria which have been selected in order to determine whether a student has been bullied through physical, verbal and/or cyber-bullying [20]:

1. Verbal bullying including derogatory comments and bad names.

2. Bullying through social exclusion or isolation.

3. Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting.

4. Bullying through lies and false rumours.

5. Having money or other things taken or damaged by students who bully.

6. Being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully.

7. Racial bullying.

8. Sexual bullying.

9. Cyber-bullying.

However, according to the above descriptors, discrepancies may arise from exactly what school students as individuals perceive to be each of the criteria – for instance, what one student may consider a 'bad name' may differ drastically from what another may believe a 'bad name' to be. Furthermore, these differences in perceptions infiltrate to distinctions and variations between adult perceptions and child perceptions [24]. For example, under the previous list of criteria, in many situations throughout a school, 'forcefulness' could be perceived to be bullying behaviour. Thus, it is important to be able to distinguish when forcefulness is not bullying, as when a teacher exercises authority over a student through giving detentions, making exclusions and employing verbal reprimands. However, unjustified and repeated shouting or sarcasm at a child's expense could be considered bullying behaviour on the teacher's part [21].

Another example of being able to distinguish between bullying situations and non-bullying situations can be expressed in the following table in which the characteristics of bullying and play-fighting behaviour are compared:

Table 1: A Comparison of Bullying Behaviour and Play Fighting Behaviour [25].

Bullying	Play Fighting
Negative facial expressions	Positive and/or neutral facial expressions
Forced or challenged to participate	Freedom to choose to participate
Full force is often seen	Full force not usually seen
Involves unilateral roles	More likely to alternate roles (e.g. chased and chaser)
Often a separation following the aggressiveness	Often no separation after a bout of play-fighting

The differences expressed above between bullying behaviour and play-fighting behaviour show that negative, forceful and aggressive behaviour defines bullying. However, just because a bystander may see a particular type of behaviour as acceptable, not all might agree. It is for these reasons that defining bullying has proved to be very difficult.

Moreover, it should be noted that very few studies have examined adolescents' own definitions of bullying. This is unfortunate since results from the few studies performed have shown that the participants do not always include the same criteria as the researchers in their definitions [2], which again highlights the differences in adult and student perceptions of bullying. Table 3, 'Categories Used for Analysis of Students' Bullying Definitions' [24] presents direct quotes from students describing what they perceive to be 'a bully'. It gives good insight into how pupils' perceptions may compare to researchers' categories of bullies and adult perceptions. It would seem that the main barrier is the terminology used. Further to this, issues may arise when questioning pupils on their perceptions of bullying, as adults tend to use their own perceptions to 'make sense of' and to categorise their findings [24].

Table 2: A Comparison of Bullying Behaviour and Play Fighting Behaviour [25].

Bullying	Play Fighting
Negative facial expressions	Positive and/or neutral facial expressions
Forced or challenged to participate	Freedom to choose to participate
Full force is often seen	Full force not usually seen
Involves unilateral roles	More likely to alternate roles (e.g. chased and chaser)
Often a separation following the aggressiveness	Often no separation after a bout of play-fighting

Table 3: Categories Used for Analysis of Students' Bullying Definitions [24].

Category	Examples	Direct Quotes 'A bully is...'
A. Power imbalance	Bigger/ older/ more popular	'someone older picking on somebody who is much smaller or younger than they are'
B. Repetition	Happens all the time/ always happens	'Bullies are people who always pick on you and always make fun of you'
C. Intentionality	Meant to do it, on purpose	'A bully hurts people on purpose'
D. Negative Behaviour (See categories 1-8 below)		
1. General Harassing Behaviour	Picks on/ makes fun of/ being mean	'A bully is a person who picks on another student'
2. Verbal Aggression	Name calling/ saying mean things to you	'a person that says not nice words' 'someone who says stuff to you when you walk down the halls'
3. Relational Aggression	Spreads rumours/ emotional abuse/ leaves you out	'a person that says to someone you cannot play with us' 'They can also spread rumours about bad things too' 'someone who hurts someone else emotionally'

4. Physical Aggression	Hits/ kicks/ spits	'Someone who pushes, kicks, trips, and chocks'
5. Physical Characteristics of Bullies	Stronger/ bigger/ older	'a person who is mean to other people and who are stronger than the other person'
6. Personality Characteristics of Bullies	Someone who is mean/ has low self-esteem	'someone who feels insecure about themselves so they take it out on other people'
7. Physical Characteristics of Victims	Small/ race/ethnicity descriptors/ clothing	'A bully usually makes fun of skin colour, race, the way they talk, walk, how they eat and what they eat'
8. Personality characteristics of victims	Low self-esteem/ shy/ won't stand up for themselves	'someone who makes fun of those that he thinks is insecure' 'A bully usually picks on those who are incapable of sticking up for themselves'

Definitions of Victims, Characteristics of Victim Behaviour and Why Students Bully

In the simplest of terms, with regards to the bullying situation, 'victims' can be defined as those who are being bullied. Victims generally tend to be, in one way or another, 'different from the social norm' [12]. It is when these differences are identified, known by others and judged that bullying may arise.

Victims do not directly provoke bullies. Owing to their 'differences from the social norm', they may become socially withdrawn, often seem anxious, depressed, fearful, and have very negative self-concepts [12]. When compared with their non-victimised peers, they tend to have few friends and are more nervous about new situations. These symptoms make them attractive targets for bullies who tend to be unusually competent in detecting vulnerability. In the primary school, initial responses to bullying among victims are likely to include crying, withdrawal, and futile anger. However, in the secondary school, victims are inclined to respond by trying to avoid and escape from bullying situations, for example, being absent from school and/or running away from home [8].

However, it has been argued that aggressive victims may inadvertently promote and maintain aggressive behaviour, for instance, if a victim were to respond to bullying behaviour with aggressive and antisocial behaviour of his/her own [4].

According to the 'Olweus Bullying Prevention Program', information about bullying suggests that there are three interrelated reasons as to why students bully. The reasons are as follows:

- Students who bully have strong needs for power and (negative) dominance.

- Students who bully find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students.

- Students who bully are often rewarded in some way for their behaviour with material or psychological rewards.

However, this is not to say that all three criteria are prevalent within all cases of bullying in schools. It could be that only one of the factors contributes to an individual's bullying behaviour.

Moreover, statistics suggest that 'general bullying' is now also driven by homophobia. According to studies, males who are 'accused' of homosexuality are more likely to have physical and psychological injury in public schools than other young men (Hetrick & Martin [11], paraphrased from [14]). However, homosexual and bisexual teens are also more likely to report bullying than heterosexual teens [5]. In a 2005 survey, students said their peers were most often bullied because of their appearance, but the next top reason was actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender expression. In a 2007 study by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) 86% of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) students said that they had experienced harassment at school during the previous year [5].

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network 2007 National School Climate Survey of more than 6,000 students, the following was determined [5]:

- Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT youth reported being verbally harassed at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.

- Nearly half (44.1%) reported being physically harassed.

- About a quarter (22.1%) reported being physically assaulted.

- Nearly two-thirds (60.8%) who experienced harassment or assault never reported the incident to the school.

- Of those who did report the incident, nearly one-third (31.1%) said the school staff did nothing in response.

It is not only LGBT teens who suffer homophobic bullying owing to their sexual orientation but also heterosexual teens who may be 'accused' of being homosexual. The issue is very contentious and difficult to investigate owing to the age range of school children and the issue of determining whether a student genuinely comprehends homophobic terms as bullying tools.

The Effects of Bullying

Many pupils are bullied and suffer in a variety of ways as a result [3]. A single student who bullies has the potential to have a wide-ranging impact upon more than just their victim. Children involved either as bullies, victims or bystanders can experience short- and long-term negative effects [16]. According to statistics compiled by the NSPCC Child Protection Awareness and Diversity Department (2007) a quarter of children bullied by their peers reported that they suffered long-term harmful effects lasting into adulthood. Not only do bullies influence their victims, they also influence those students who observe the bullying and, as a result, they may also affect the overall climate of the school community.

Students deserve to feel safe at school and have the right to learn and work in a secure environment where they feel valued and respected [1]. However, when a child becomes victimised, the bullying behaviour may affect him or her in later life. For example, according to Olweus [20], a victim of bullying may experience the following:

- Depression.

- Low self-esteem.

- Health problems.

- Poor grades.

- Suicidal thoughts.

Moreover, statistics show that in the UK, at least sixteen children will commit suicide because of bullying every year, yet the true total could be much higher [5]. Suicide remains among the leading causes of death of children under fourteen where 'bully related suicide' is now being termed as 'Bullycide' [15]. Further to this, research indicates that LGBT youths may be more likely to think about and attempt suicide than heterosexual teens. With suicide being known as a permanent

and tragic solution to a temporary problem, and with bullying being a documented cause for it, it is evident that bullying should be taken very seriously to minimise and eliminate the potential for such tragic circumstances.

Furthermore, those students who observe bullying may also feel that they are in an unsafe environment. Effects may include feeling [20]:

- Fearful.

- Powerless to act.

- Guilty for not acting.

- Tempted to participate.

In this sense, it is not only the victim who needs protecting but also the bystanders. Furthermore, it could be suggested that a bully may also need protecting from him or herself.

Students who intentionally bully others should be held accountable for their actions, if not for the sake of their victims then for their own sake, as those who bully their peers are also more likely than those students who do not bully others to [20]:

- Get into frequent fights.

- Steal and vandalise property.

- Drink alcohol and smoke.

- Report poor grades.

- Perceive a negative climate at school.

- Carry a weapon.

Thus, such behaviour feeds into greater school exclusion so the individual may spend less time in education owing to expulsion. It is these factors that could lead to further social exclusion culminating in criminal behaviour and convictions. Furthermore, this behaviour may lead to age-inappropriate behaviour which could further stigmatise them both within their age group and society as a whole. As a result, the behaviour may reassert itself as a spiral of misconduct in which negative actions lead to negative consequences, which then could further estrange the individual, resulting in more extreme types of negative behaviour.

The Need for a Whole-School Policy

When bullying continues and a school does not take action, the entire school climate can be affected in the following ways [23]:

- The school may develop a fearful and disrespectful environment.

- Students may experience difficulty learning.

- Students may feel insecure.

- Students may dislike school and gain a negative attitude towards learning.

- Students may perceive that teachers and staff have little control and do not care about them.

Bullying occurs throughout the whole school environment, and is not just restricted to any particular curriculum subject but may tend to occur more frequently within particular areas of a school (for example, during lunch and break times). As there is no particular subject/area in which bullying behaviour occurs within a school, a 'whole-School' policy should be designed and put into practice. Suckling et al [23] state that 'schools need to adopt a whole-school approach for effecting a long-term and positive influence on the school environment. This is particularly important when creating and maintaining a school culture that values and practises an anti-bullying ethos'.

There has been acknowledgement that schools themselves can play an effective role in preventing and tackling bullying situations and, in accordance with this, there have been increasing requirements for schools to have explicit policies on bullying [17]. Furthermore, regular school inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) now incorporate the issue of whether a school has a bullying problem, and whether the school has taken measures to combat it, including having a policy on bullying. In November 1999, it became a legal requirement for schools in England to have some form of anti-bullying policy [22].

Furthermore, parents and children may be able to sue a school, teacher or Local Education Authority for damages as compensation for psychological harm or physical injuries suffered by a child as a result of a school or teacher negligently failing to act to protect a child from bullying [9]. Negligence arises where a duty of care is owed to the child, and that duty of care is breached, resulting in injury or damage to the child [9]. Therefore, schools potentially face tort liability if they leave themselves open to negligence claims with regard to bullying. This

reinforces the importance of, and the need for, clear and distinct anti-bullying policies and practices enforced throughout the school environment.

In addition, progress in understanding school bullying was made in the 1990s with an increase in resources for schools (e.g. the 'Don't suffer in silence' pack made available for free by the government in the UK). Now, it is no longer acceptable for a school to deny that bullying happens; schools must be able to justify what they would do, if and when bullying occurs [22].

Suckling et al [23] state that a whole-school policy should aim to:

- Reduce existing bullying problems among students.

- Prevent new bullying problems.

- Achieve better peer relations at school.

However, according to Boulton [2], whilst investigating 'Pupils' perceptions of bullying and disruptions to concentration and attention to school work', the most common solutions provided by pupils, rather than adults, in order to help fellow pupils affected by bullying included the following:

- Helping them feel safe from bullying in class.

- Reminding them to disclose/seek help if they are bullied.

- Encouraging teachers to be supportive of victims of bullying.

- Encouraging teachers to be on the lookout for signs that pupils have been bullied.

- Using social support from other pupils.

Therefore, it may be beneficial to take into account and utilise information provided by pupils when designing and implementing a whole-school policy. Taking pupils' perceptions into account could improve an anti-bullying policy as it may help to increase the percentage of students who actually disclose incidences of bullying. According to Frisén et al [10] among bullied adolescents, 23% had not told anyone about the bullying and 35% had not received any help. Further to this, research involving 2,300 pupils aged 10-14 from schools across England found that 30% of children did not tell anyone that they had been bullied. This percentage was higher for boys and older children [18]. Therefore, it is vital that pupils' perceptions of any anti-bullying practices within their school are taken into account in order for them to be able to have faith and make use of the anti-bullying practices to their full effect. However, even a strong whole-school anti-bullying

policy which has integrated ideas and insight from pupils cannot guarantee that pupils will always disclose incidents of bullying.

Conclusion

Bullying in schools was only acknowledged as an issue during the 1970s. Since then, it has become widely researched, with schools and the government recognising the serious nature of the matter. It has become apparent that bullying is a complex issue and is difficult to define. Taking bullying seriously means finding out about it, and then doing something about it [22]. It appears that bullies, their victims and bystanders are likely to be harmed by their involvement in bullying behaviour [3] and hence, bullying is an issue that demands the attention of all those who are concerned with children's well-being in schools.

Isolated instances of bullying within a school community have the potential to impact the whole school environment. A whole-school policy is therefore needed to deal with the problem effectively. However, when designing and instating anti-bullying policies, challenges and disputes may arise owing to the differing perceptions on the part of adult decision-makers and pupils, both victims and bullies. The differences in how bullying is perceived by different groups highlights the need for schools to spend time focusing on the interpretation of bullying throughout the school community [16].

Bullying should be clearly defined by schools before intervention schemes are introduced to ensure consistency across the whole school. For pupils and adults to arrive at a shared understanding of bullying, schools may need to re-evaluate their existing practices in order to consider pupils' perspectives and arrive at a policy negotiated and agreed upon by the whole school community.

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'Unsex Me Here': Intertwining Characteristics of Queer and Straight Composers

Rachel Becker*

Music Faculty

Discussions of sexuality as it surfaces in musical works or relates to a composer's style have become popular in musicology. In this paper, I argue that the effects of sexuality on musical composition are often overemphasized by academics, critics, and musicians. I provide background information on the ways in which critics and academics have discussed the relationship between sexuality and music, and on the loaded language that often makes its way into these discussions. I then examine two pairs of composers – Samuel Barber and Howard Hanson, and Aaron Copland and Roy Harris – and look at the ways in which musical characteristics cross lines of sexuality. The goal of this paper is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the reception of these composers and works, but to consider the ways in which divisions between composers have been emphasized because of the place of sexuality within society.

Discussions of sexuality as it surfaces in musical works or relates to a composer's musical style have become popular in musicology in the last three decades. In this paper, by looking at American composers who wrote symphonies in the first half of the twentieth century, I argue that the effects of sexuality on musical composition are often overemphasized both by academics and by critics and musicians. I first provide background on the ways in which critics and academics have discussed the relationship between sexuality and music, particularly musical composition, and the loaded language that often makes its way into these discussions either purposefully or unconsciously. I then examine two pairs of composers – Samuel Barber and Howard Hanson, and Roy Harris and Aaron Copland. One composer of each pair is gay and one is straight, and

I look at the similarities of musical style within each pair and the ways in which musical characteristics cross lines of sexuality. This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of the reception of the compositions and composers which I discuss. Rather, its goal is to consider the ways in which divisions between composers have been emphasized because of the place of sexuality within society.

Treatment of Sexuality in Discussions of Musical Composition

Not many similarities can be drawn between Nadine Hubbs, a musicologist who celebrates the contributions that gay composers have made to American music, and Charles Ives, a composer who rails against anyone 'of defective mentality', which for him encompasses those who are gay, effeminate, female, or European.[1] But while Hubbs clearly has the right side of the coin in speaking positively about gay composers, I would like to call attention to one similarity. Both paint a connection between the sexuality of American composers and their compositional styles with a wide brush. Ives, writing in 1922, argues that those with 'defective' minds, which would then have been understood to include homosexuals, could only write effeminate music. And this music, like the 'Andante emasculata' he mockingly notates in his *Second String Quartet* (1913–15), should be 'violently hooted down'.[2] Hubbs, on the other hand, links the conservative modernism which would come to represent the strengths of American music in the United States and abroad – music which avoided the desperately innovative serialism and atonality at the forefront of compositional development in favour of more tonal and historically-based music – with the large number of homosexual American composers in the first half of the twentieth century.

It would be very difficult and fairly foolish to deny any connection between the sexuality of American composers in the first half of the twentieth century and this conservative symphonic style. Society had not drastically relented at the time in its attitude towards homosexuality: in England in 1895 Oscar Wilde was jailed for his sexuality, and in America in 1936 Henry Cowell, another composer of symphonies, was jailed for his. In fact, sodomy remained illegal in New York until 1980 and in much of America until 2003.[3] Centred in

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[1] Charles Ives, 'Notes to 114 Songs', in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, edited by Bryan R. Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 212.

[2] Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 74.

[3] The Supreme Court case *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003 legalized sodomy in the United States. The New York Court of Appeals case *People v Ronald Onofre* in 1980 legalized sodomy in New York State. Sodomy was illegal in all states pre-1962.

New York, a growing community of gay composers wrote in a conservative style, focussing on traditional forms such as the symphony and on traditional sounds such as fewer dissonances and emotional melodies, rather than following the atonal and experimental music being composed elsewhere in America and Europe. The standard textbook by Burkholder and Grout describes this style as 'offer[ing] listeners a thread that can be followed through identifiable themes, readily audible forms, and programmatic subjects or titles'.[4] As it grew, this community of like-minded musicians must have seemed increasingly attractive to other gay composers. Hubbs argues that the conservative style favoured by these composers, often coded as feminine in opposition to the 'daring', 'masculine' avant-garde, offered an escape from the heteronormative compositional style which increasingly 'appropriated "brute" masculinity'.[5] Additionally, there is a 'historically tenacious association of music with femininity or effeminacy, of effeminacy in turn with homosexuality (conventionally figured in male terms), and of musical activity with queer persons'.[6] This 'tenacious association' between effeminacy and homosexuality was cemented in scientific studies of the time, notably the Terman and Miles Attitude Interest Analysis Survey, which purported to find discrepancies between physical and mental sex.[7] In their survey, homosexuals were viewed as having 'feminine' minds.[8] And Hubbs provides examples of the link between music and femininity at this time, from music critics such as Paul Rosenfeld, to conductors such as Thomas Beecham, to the ever-present composer Charles Ives. These men lament the 'emasculation' and 'weakness' of 'insufficiently virile' music.[9] Indeed, in America during the first half of the twentieth century, 'musical' was used as slang for homosexual within the gay community, bringing full circle this conflation between music, the feminine, and homosexuality.[10]

Sexuality-based analysis is not unique to the American composers that Hubbs

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[4]J. Peter Burkholder et al, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2006), 914.

[5]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 75.

[6]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 66.

[7]Catharine Cox Miles and Lewis M. Terman, 'Sex Difference in the Association of Ideas', *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 41, no. 2 (April 1929), 165-206; L. M. Terman and Miles, C. C, *Sex and personality*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1936). That their work remains often discussed in articles in American Psychology Association journals speaks to its importance in studies of sexuality in the early twentieth century.

[8]Marie Hoffman, 'The measurement of masculinity and femininity: Historical perspective and implications for counseling', *Journal of Counseling and Development*, Vol. 79, no. 4. (Fall 2001), 472.

[9]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 73, 78.

[10]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 66.

and Ives discuss. Scholars of Schubert, of Tchaikovsky, and of Handel have similarly argued that evidence can be found of a composer's sexuality in his musical choices.[11] These arguments should not be dismissed wholesale: I fully agree that aspects of personality and life experiences do influence artists, and sexuality is often a significant force whether it is embraced or hated.

However, a composer's style is never completely determined by outside influences such as the presence of a community of gay composers. Purely musical preferences are naturally a powerful force in composition, and they are often described as not completely under the control of the composer. Aaron Copland describes his discovery of music as an 'instinctual drive toward a world of sound', and his style as a 'desire to make the music I wanted to write come out of the life I had lived'.[12] And Howard Hanson states of his composing that 'my instinct always gets the better of my intellect!'[13] The fact remains that many American composers – particularly those who used a more conservative modernist style, such as the influential New York-based community – were homosexual, and that connections, such as those made by Nadine Hubbs, can be drawn between these styles and sexuality. But as sexuality-based analysis increases in scope, its methodologies and conclusions become more and more tenuous. Considerable similarities exist between gay American composers who wrote symphonies in the 1930s and 40s and straight composers of the same period. This is apparent in examining compositions by Samuel Barber and Howard Hanson, and by Aaron Copland and Roy Harris.

Effeminate or Rugged? Barber and Hanson as Romantic Composers

Barber (1910–1981) was undeniably influenced by and attracted to European compositional styles and techniques, particularly those associated with the nineteenth century. Critics and academics alike refer to him as Romantic, neo-Romantic, or post-Romantic, emphasizing his old-fashioned, lush, and songful

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[11] See Maynard Solomon, 'Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini', 19th-*Century Music*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring, 1989), 193-206 and Rita Steblin, 'The Peacock's Tale: Schubert's Sexuality Reconsidered', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 5-33: Philip Ross Bullock, 'Ambiguous Speech and Eloquent Silence: The Queerness of Tchaikovsky's Songs', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Summer 2008), 94-128 and innumerable discussions of the situation of Tchaikovsky's death: Ellen T. Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: voice and desire in the chamber cantatas,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001) and reviews such as Thomas McGeary, 'Review: A Gay-Studies Handel', *Early Music*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Nov., 2002), 608-612.

[12] Aaron Copland, 'The Composer in Industrial America', in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, edited by Bryan R. Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 218-219.

[13] David Russell Williams, *Conversations with Howard Hanson* (Arkadelphia, Arkansas: Delta Publications, 1988), 4.

style as well as his connections to this nineteenth-century European, rather than American, music. He himself referred to his style as 'international', in explicit contrast to 'American'.[14] To the general population, this was a positive characteristic: Barber was popular in the U.S., and frequently served as a sort of 'musical ambassador' from the U.S. to Europe. His music is described as 'lyric' and 'sensitive', exploring 'feeling' while avoiding 'extravagant gestures'.[15] But to many critics and composers, this combination of styles was nearly intolerable. To them, Barber's music was 'outdated' and 'cliché', filled with failed attempts to 'disguise' his Romantic tendencies under a veil of more modern techniques such as neo-Classical counterpoint and 'Schoenbergian tone rows'. Contemporary composer Kurt List described Barber's non-Romantic characteristics as 'mannerisms' taken from other composers, implying they were naturally beyond Barber's reach,[16] and contemporary critic R. D. Darrell described Barber's First Symphony as 'a grotesque harlequinade of specious modernity (which, it goes without saying, is about as 'modern' as Richard Strauss [a European composer of the turn of the century])'.[17]

Looking at the language of these last accusations and the gendering associated with Europe, America, and musical styles during Barber's life, it is easy to map a critique of Barber's sexuality onto that of his compositions. Europe and the European music Barber preferred were seen as a 'feminine' other in comparison to a 'masculine' America, and as 'other' in the same way as homosexuality: the film scholar Vito Russo notes that at this time 'homosexuality was still something you did in the dark or in Europe – preferably both'.[18] A more musically specific connection is again found in Ives, who similarly links 'Europeanist' and 'effeminate'.[19] So while Barber is trying to hide his preferred (European) compositional style under a veneer of 'manly' modernism, but is unable to, he is thus also trying to conceal his homosexuality, but his so-called 'unnatural' 'weakness' shines through.[20] If phrased differently, there is an element of truth in this. Barber was discreet and did not publicise his sexuality, but he did not actively hide it either. Unlike his fellow composer Virgil Thomson, he went on no showy pseudo-dates with glamorous women, and Barber and composer Gian

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[14]Michael S. Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture: An Imagined Conspiracy* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 158.

[15]Nicholas Tawa, *The Great American Symphony* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 39.

[16]Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture,* 159.

[17]Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 285.

[18]Vito Russo in Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture,* 82.

[19]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 74.

[20]Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 73.

Carlo Menotti overtly lived together: they and the home they shared were featured in *American Home* Magazine in 1946.[21] Barber lived a private, privileged, and in many ways conservative life, his sexuality a quiet presence.

Instances of all these characteristics – Romantic, lyric, emotional, and neo-Classical, dissonant, polyphonic – are easily found in Barber's *First Symphony*. Barber's Romanticism is evident in a full texture and rich harmonies, as well as a soaring melody without many added dissonant notes. However, the first section of the symphony ends in angry competing rhythms strongly reminiscent of works by Igor Stravinsky, a staunchly modernist European composer. Long fugal sections seem to draw strongly on neo-Classical aesthetics, as this kind of exact imitation evoked the musical styles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But these alternate with passages which coalesce into swirling clouds of sound much more reminiscent of Romantic tastes. The final section is a passacaglia, another technique associated with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which fades in and out under more modern chromatic lines and heartrending melodies alike. Here Barber's neo-Classicism feeds and fuels his Romanticism. The finale is emotional, yet sombre and controlled.

Barber is clearly a modern composer, writing in the 1930s rather than the nineteenth century, and he combines dissonances and modernism with Classical and Romantic techniques in his symphony. Thomson, though constantly stressing Barber's 'songful' qualities, allows that his 'rhythmic drive is powerful'.[22] In taking the *First Symphony* as a microcosm of Barber's work, Thomson's statement seems apt. Most of the symphony is lyric and expressive, but key passages certainly show 'powerful' rhythmic writing, reflecting Barber's ability to combine modernism with Romanticism. However, Nicholas Tawa, writing decades after Thomson, argues that 'muscular lines and aggressive rhythms... would usually make an uncomfortable fit' for Barber, who was more at home with 'sensuous Italianate lyricism'.[23] Though this statement does not specifically address the *First Symphony*, when Tawa discusses this symphony he describes the rhythmic scherzo section as 'comic serious'.[24] While portions of the scherzo come across as light-hearted, Tawa's inability to associate descriptors such as 'muscular' or 'aggressive' with Barber's music recalls the loaded words used by earlier critics. Barber, however, seems untroubled by those characteristics which critics dismissed as 'cliché', embracing the 'international' Romanticism he chose while

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[21]Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture,* 156.

[22]Virgil Thomson, *Twentieth Century Composers, Vol. 1: American Music since 1910* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 87.

[23]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 35-36.

[24]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 42.

not being afraid to include 'mannerisms' of other composers.

Howard Pollack, in an article on Barber's Romanticism and love of Sibelius, writes that 'Barber and Menotti, lovers for a number of years, quickly formed a two-man antimodernist front, disparaging the music of their immediate elders as experimental and cerebral'.[25] They were of course joined by many other American composers, including Howard Hanson (1896–1981), who functions nicely as a mirror and foil to Barber. Though he often spoke more kindly of more radically modernist composers than Barber did, Hanson also described his own music as 'an avowal against a certain coldly abstract, would-be non-sentimental music'.[26] Like Barber, he was self-admittedly influenced by European Romantics, high among them Sibelius, and aimed to write music comprehensible to the public. His music is emotional, lyric, and conservative, but also includes neo-Classical techniques as well as dissonances and modality. His *Third Symphony* and Barber's *First* were written only two years apart, and both were wildly popular.

And Hanson was not gay. In reviews and descriptions Hanson is 'bold', not 'unctuous', a Romantic but 'unquestionably American'.[27] His 'lush melodies' and 'sentiment' are nevertheless 'rousing' and 'frank'.[28] No snide comments about disguises here: rather than 'sensuous' and 'sensitive', like Barber attempting a veneer of masculinity, Hanson is 'rugged'.[29] The reviews use more masculine language, despite Hanson's stated love of the same Romanticism and international elements that were negatively associated with femininity and emasculation in Barber. Whereas Barber seemed caught in a 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' quandary of cliché Europeanism and unconvincing modernism, Hanson is praised for both 'unabashed hyperbole' and 'sincerely felt' writing.[30]

Yet musical similarities between the two are striking, and the differences in reviews and in language are not borne out in the compositions. The first movement of Hanson's *Third Symphony* is weighty, its centre of balance low, its emotions drawn out reluctantly in the slow, overlapping horns. But Barber's *First* is also heavy with emotion, emphatic in its crying out. Both use rich harmonies – Barber in the strings, and Hanson in the horns – and sinuous accompanimental lines. Hanson does seem to include more breadth of emotion, borne out through greater musical contrast and the implicit heroism of the brass

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[25]Howard Pollack, 'Samuel Barber, Jean Sibelius, and the Making of an American Romantic', *The Musical Quarterly* 84, No. 2 (Summer, 2000), 176.

[26]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 49.

[27]Burnet C. Tuthill, 'Howard Hanson', *The Musical Quarterly* 22, No. 2 (Apr., 1936), 140, 143.

[28]Tuthill, 'Howard Hanson', 143.

[29]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 35, 49.

[30]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 51, 49.

section, but the second movement is as tender and sentimental as anything written by Barber. A lush and gentle lullaby is accompanied by undulating harmonies. The music is intensely sweet, and though brief interjections by the horns recall the mood of the first movement, this Romanticism is absolute. Hanson opens the scherzo – the third movement – in a style more militant than dance-like, with drums and wails. These wild and whirling sounds seem far beyond the restraint characteristic of Barber. But soon the movement does become a dance, as the drum call transforms into a jig. The mood can't settle down, and here we truly see a departure from Barber as Hanson appears more unabashedly emotional and Romantic, less restrained. Movement four, though no more restrained, again recalls Barber. Hanson draws on material of previous movements and hints of a modern sound world creep in through modality and chromaticism, using notes outside the traditional Western scale that had come to represent old-fashioned Europe.

Emotionally, Hanson does seem more 'rugged' than Barber, bolder and freer. But the tools which Hanson uses to achieve this are incredibly similar to Barber's. So even allowing for differences in composing style and for personal preferences, the criticisms of each composer seem to draw strongly on societal biases. Despite their striking similarities, Barber is praised for his 'restraint' while Hanson lauded for his lack of it: Hanson is 'frank', Barber 'cliché'. These comments are reminiscent of the value judgements based on gender, sexuality, and the other. Homosexuality, effeminacy, Romanticism and lyricism, refinement, anti-modernism, anti-Americanism, and a pro-Europe attitude all become inextricably linked. Thus Barber is presented as too refined and European in his use of Italianate lyrical melodies and as uncomfortable in his use of what should be appropriate 'muscular' rhythms. And yet while both symphonies are Romantic in harmony, melody, and general affect, and strongly influenced by the same European composers, in contrast the heterosexual Hanson is described as able to appropriately link these 'negative' elements to modern, masculine, American music. The critical suggestion, unconscious or not, is that as a gay composer, Barber must have been uncomfortable and unable to deal with anything falling into the modern and masculine side of music, while Hanson, as a straight composer, would have naturally been at home there.

Restrained or Brusque? Copland and Harris as Nationalist Composers

Much like Hanson and Barber, Roy Harris (1898–1979) and Aaron Copland (1900–1990) represent two sides of the same compositional coin. Both composers deliberately set out to write music which would be recognizably American. They

wished to evoke the 'unsentimental' wide open spaces of the American West, while remaining emotionally expressive.[31] And they did this through an emphasis on open intervals, with help from jazz elements, strong rhythms, and nonstandard harmonies. Though Harris's *Third Symphony* was written in 1939 and Copland's between 1944 and 1946, and the pieces significantly differ in length, Tawa reports the debate that raged among critics as to which one was 'the greatest American Symphony'.[32] Connection seems unavoidable. And yet, as with Barber and Hanson, a difference arises: Copland was gay, Harris was not.

As a Jewish, outspokenly leftist gay man, Copland was the 'other' to American society in more ways than Barber. Famously, Copland was investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for his suspected Communist tendencies. But a fear of Communists in Copland's America was paired with a fear of homosexuality and a fear of Jews: Congressman George Dondero accused an 'effeminate elite' of working with a 'sinister conspiracy conceived in the black heart of Russia' to undermine America's image.[33] Like Barber, Copland did not overly disguise his sexuality. He did not marry, had no conspicuous female companions, and sometimes lived with his lovers. His life as a gay man was private, but not hidden.[34] Because of this, it seems likely that rumours of Copland's sexuality may have also fuelled the HUAC investigation. Despite all of this, Copland was very successful and widely acclaimed by the public and critics as the leading American composer of his time. Supporting critics describe his music as 'restrained' yet 'meaningful', 'conjuring visions of an ideal America', while opposing critics find the opposite – Roy Harris described an earlier work of Copland's as 'whorehouse music', hardly a patriotic association – setting Copland's music as a battleground between masculine American and homosexual (effeminate) other.[35] Though focussing on Copland's religion, Daniel Gregory Mason's criticism, in which he contrasted the 'speciousness, superficial charm', and 'violent. . . extremes of passion' which he found in Copland with the 'sobriety and restraint' of Protestant composers, uses language which is also gendered.[36] Like Barber, Copland's music is associated with the feminine and compared unfavourably to the ideal of the 'masculine' American West. But Thomson associates Copland with 'our sparse and dissonant rural traditions rather

[31] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 63, 175, 184.

[32] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 172.

[33] Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture,* 32.

[34] Sherry, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture*, 24.

[35] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 179. Roy Harris in Pollack, 'The Dean of Gay American Composers', 41.

[36] Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, 85.

than the thick suavities of our urban manner', rather than with 'speciousness'.[37]

The *Third Symphony* opens with a stark and simple theme in which an emphasis on fourths and fifths, intervals between two notes which sound 'open' to the ear, is already evident. From this simple, joyful sound grows increasingly dissonant and complex music, but Copland's underlying devotion to simplicity comes through. Contrasts continue through the second movement, which features both energetic rhythmic writing that perhaps represents the 'industrious citizenry' of America and smooth pastoral sections showing its 'spacious Great Plains'.[38] This contrast also features in the third movement, which opens with glassy, dissonant string lines before transforming into a dance-like section reminiscent of Copland's other works like *Appalachian Spring*, and the fourth movement, which after a quiet opening erupts in a brass and timpani fanfare drawn directly from Copland's *Fanfare for a Common Man*. Even here, though, interludes return to restraint. Through all of this, Copland's love of sparse textures and spacious harmonies remains obvious, transforming disparate elements and dramatic, grandiose statements into an emotionally affecting portrait of America.

Copland's music contains many characteristics considered 'masculine', such as dissonances, rhythmic emphasis, and a withdrawal from European sounds, and these characteristics are emphasized in reviews of his compositions. These elements are equally visible in the music of Roy Harris, who, like Copland, is described as overtly emotional and nostalgic for rural America. Roy Harris consciously created an image of himself as an 'artistic Uncle Sam', a composer musically representing the American West and its strong, rustic inhabitants.[39] Although Harris is most often described in staunchly American, masculine terms, described as 'rough-hewn' and 'brusque', full of 'strength and emotional vigor', hints of the language seen in descriptions of the other composers appear in criticism of Harris.[40] Arthur Berger calls attention to the European techniques, such as counterpoint, in Harris's writing, stating that these 'made curious bedfellows' with the American 'national character' of his style.[41] Harris's biographer, Dan Stehman, contrasts Harris's writing with the 'brittle smartness' of his contemporaries: Harris naturally takes the part of the hardworking American in contrast to this.[42] These descriptions align Harris with masculine America, in contrast to the European characteristics identified with composers such as Barber

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[37] Virgil Thomson in Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 178.
[38] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 176.
[39] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 53.
[40] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 55, 63.
[41] Arthur Berger in Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 56.
[42] Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 59.

and labelled feminine and other.

Despite the American style ascribed to Harris's music, criticisms of Harris, like those of Copland, generally focus on an over-the-top and indulgent quality of his music. While Copland is accused of being too passionate, though, Harris is 'crude'.[43] In fact, 'crude' is Copland's word, and in the same statement Copland somewhat ironically compares Harris's writing to Walt Whitman's aesthetic – Whitman being, like Copland, a prominent and emphatically American artist who was also prominently gay.[44] And while Copland is accused of being insufficiently American through critics' discussions of his sexuality, Harris errs on the side of being overly nationalistic. Virgil Thomson accused Harris of a 'shameless use of patriotic feelings to advertise his product'.[45] In these terms, Copland errs on the side of femininity, Harris on the side of masculinity. But despite these differences in reviews, and although Harris's *Third Symphony* is much more compact than Copland's, many critics linked Harris and Copland, and in particular their third symphonies. Indeed, many similarities can be drawn between the two works.

Like Copland's *Third Symphony*, Harris's begins with a single line that is slightly chromatic and hints at modality, bringing in 'modern' notes to an 'old-fashioned' melody. The music slowly becomes more emphatic and more thickly scored, and Harris emphasizes open intervals, evoking wide spaces. Harris's symphony is more emotionally consistent than Copland's: the first three movements all seem to grow out of the opening melodic material, becoming increasingly complex and active. The third movement eventually gains a rhythmic accompaniment and the mood lightens, evoking busy life with stylized accents and almost dance-like motifs. The overall effect is much less dramatic than in Copland's symphony. However, with the fourth movement, all this changes. Tawa states that the movement's 'curtness and the heavy percussion blows that go with it compensate for the more sinuous themes of the previous section'.[46] This music is rustic, and simultaneously playful, gruff, and tragic: its open intervals and scoring unmistakably represent America. While Copland exhibits more range of emotion and emphasizes dramatic contrasts rather than an inexorably unwinding progression, similarities between the two composers are clear, and Harris certainly equals Copland for grandiose statements and highly wrought emotion.

Hubbs states that 'in comparison with other arenas of the time, the zone inhabited by many twentieth-century gay modernist artists, and certainly com-

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[43]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 63.

[44]Aaron Copland, *The New Music*, rev. and enlarged ed. (New York: Norton, 1968), 120.

[45]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 61.

[46]Tawa, *The Great American Symphony*, 59.

posers, was a relatively utopic one'.[47] This is true, to an extent. Many composers were able to live relatively open lives as gay men within their social circles, and even while music was viewed as suspect by much of the population, it provided an area of emotional freedom for these composers. However, as the criticism and writing about both homosexual and straight composers demonstrates, societal judgement was always present to some degree and remains so today. Gendered terms, which are strongly linked to views of sexuality, pervade reviews, and homosexual composers tend to be judged more harshly for using techniques perceived as 'feminine'. The differences in reviews for Barber and Hanson, or for Harris and Copland bear this out even today, as seen in Tawa's discussions.

I don't want to argue that sexuality should be off limits as an area of analysis, either owing to a lack of recorded authorial intent or owing to its presence. Whether or not Barber or Copland explicitly stated an intention to express his feelings about being homosexual does not dictate whether or not those feelings are expressed in his music, and books like that by Nadine Hubbs have their place. But while Copland, for example, could hardly have been more involved in the culture of gay composers, as described by Howard Pollack, his musical style is clearly similar to Harris, who was not at all. This is further complicated by composers such as Henry Cowell, who was gay and who turned to a conservative style similar to that of Harris or Copland later in life, seemingly in an attempt to blend into heterosexual American society after his jail sentence. For Copland, conservatism may have been a means to express his sexuality, but for Cowell it was a reaction against his sexuality. How do we reconcile this except to say that while Copland's sexuality may have influenced his style, it was far from the only influence, and not the only route to this style? It is important to recognize that many American composers of this time were gay, and that many of these composers flocked to a more conservative, symphonic style, but there is a danger of reducing these composers solely to their sexuality. Some composers were gay. And in many ways, they were just like everyone else, strong but not sole contributors to an acclaimed American repertoire.

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45   *The New Collection*

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Testing the Grey Matter: Neuroscience and the Pursuit of the Unknown

Ruth Helen Faram*

MRC Anatomical Neuropharmacology Unit, Dept. of Pharmacology

Recent advances in brain research have led to a dramatic increase in the visibility of Neuroscience. The rapid translation of laboratory research to applied clinical therapy has allowed for the treatment of some devastating neurological disorders, something that did not seem possible even twenty-five years ago. Recent interest in the expanding field of Neuroscience has lead to many groundbreaking discoveries. Here I summarise two of these – Neuronal Plasticity and Adult Neurogenesis. I discuss these in relation to fundamental research, which is the most basic, 'pure' research, often focused at a cellular level, which may not initially have any direct commercial benefits. I attempt to highlight the importance of such fundamental knowledge and suggest why it will remain the backbone of all scientific research, despite any advances made at a clinical level. I briefly describe the area of Neuroscience that I am currently studying, which engages several cellular and molecular components, in an attempt to share not only my enthusiasm for the brain, but also to highlight the significance of any fundamental research from a practical perspective.

Initially coined by George W Bush, the final decade of the twentieth century is known as the 'Decade of the Brain'. In the USA this became an inter-agency initiative sponsored by the American National Institutes of Health, 'to enhance public awareness of the benefits to be derived from brain research'.[1] During that time, the field of Neuroscience flourished worldwide, and it continues to do so today. Indeed, so great have been the developments that the original definition of Neuroscience as the 'biology of the nervous system' seems inadequate or reductionist. More appropriate is to consider Neuroscience to be a

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*Email: ruth.faram@new.ox.ac.uk
[1]http://www.loc.gov/loc/brain/proclaim.html

multidisciplinary science with branches in psychology, mathematics, chemistry, physics, philosophy, economics and many other areas. Delve deeper and one is confronted with a plethora of subdivisions which are all at the forefront of brain research: molecular, cellular, structural, functional, evolutionary, computational, developmental, and pharmacological. Each of these incorporates a wide range of approaches and techniques. Effectively, recent expansions within the field of Neuroscience have resulted in an inability to define it with a single phrase.

What the 'decade of the brain' did for us

During the decade of the brain, several conceptual advances were made. The most powerful was the acceptance by scientists that the brain will not be easily understood. Initially scientists believed that once brain development was completed, the brain remained static in form and, consequently, it would be possible to understand the totality of brain function through experimentation and laboratory research. This view is illustrated in the following account by David H. Hubel, eminent neurobiologist and 1981 Nobel laureate:

> The brain is a tissue. It is a complicated, intricately woven tissue, like nothing else we know of in the universe, but it is composed of cells, as any tissue is. They are, to be sure, highly specialized cells, but they function according to the laws that govern any other cells. Their electrical and chemical signals can be detected, recorded and interpreted and their chemicals can be identified; the connections that constitute the brain's woven feltwork can be mapped. In short, the brain can be studied, just as the kidney can.

At that point in time, any attempt to understand the networks of neural connectivity seemed difficult, but not beyond the realms of possibility. Over two decades later, not only are we still attempting to understand brain function and brain cell interaction, but we are also faced with extensive complexity following the discovery that brain cells do not remain static, but rather have dynamic abilities to form new neuronal connections, and new networks, post-development. It has also been discovered that new brain cells are born in the adult brain, which have the ability to integrate into new or already established neuronal networks. Here we have two discoveries of paramount importance in the field of Neuroscience: **Neuronal plasticity** – the ability of neurons to form new connections, and **Neurogenesis** – the ability of stem cells in specific brain regions to give rise to new neurons.

Neuronal plasticity

The human brain consists of some 100 billion neurons – specialized electrically excitable nerve cells that are able to transmit signals both *chemically* and *electrically*. This communication is not necessarily as uniform as one might initially imagine: in fact, it is now recognized that some of the millions of neuronal connections that occur are 'plastic' (hence the term *synaptic plasticity*),[2] such that the strength of the communication between one neuron and another can change over time. This may occur owing to a myriad of cellular mechanisms at either end of the synapse, and the changes differ considerably between neuronal networks. The exact explanations of why this may occur are themselves diverse. The most documented explanations to date are those associated with the intricate processes of learning and memory, which may be based on external (environmental) and internal (physiological) factors that are considered to be 'encoded' by changes in synaptic signalling. In short, an increased strength in signalling between two or more neurons could be the encoding process required for the laying down of a new memory[3] and is central to our understanding of who we are and how the brain may be functioning.

Neurogenesis

Until recently, it was presumed that all neurons of the brain were born during development. A major milestone in the field of Neuroscience was the discovery that in the adult brain new neurons are born from stem cells. Briefly, stem cells are found in all multicellular organisms. They may be embryonic or adult in origin and they have the unique ability to divide, renew, and differentiate into highly specialized cell types. This 'pluripotency', or ability of stem cells to differentiate into any mature cell type, has resulted in both a theoretical and practical abundance of therapeutic strategies that use stem cells in an attempt to repair or replace tissues that have been damaged by injury or disease. This has been particularly the case since the successful isolation and *in vitro* manipulation of human embryonic stem cells in 1998.[4] This potential application of stem cells as a tool to repair the brain, or spinal cord, has highlighted the gaps in neuroscientific research, yet in doing so has driven the researcher to investigate the complex

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[2]Nicholls et al (2001) From Neuron to Brain, 4th Edition. Sinauer Associates, Inc.

[3]For a review, see Martin, Grimwood, Morris (2000). Synaptic Plasticity and Memory: an evaluation of the hypothesis. *Ann Rev Neurosci* 23 649-711.

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functioning of the nervous system.[5] Additionally, these potential therapeutic avenues will yield promising insights into the functioning of the adult brain. In fact, the complex nature of the nervous system may work in favour of such therapy – the unique properties of specific neurons may, for example, allow for specific cell targeting or targeted pharmacological intervention, since pluripotent cells are able to replicate the properties of many specific cell types. Currently, the magnitude of the challenges that must be overcome before this is clinically possible is huge. The pluripotent stem cells, once identified, must be isolated, differentiated (which, for each cell type, will require different molecular/cellular pathways, many of which are yet to be understood), and successfully integrated *in vivo* into the tissue, or brain region, of interest. Owing to this, and the ethical debates that continually arise concerning the use of embryonic stem cells, it is clear that there are a myriad of challenges facing researchers. But perhaps the most significant aspect of this progress is that the brain was never before considered to be 'repairable' in the same sense as other tissues outside of the central nervous system. It wasn't until 1975 when Josef Altman[6] discovered newborn cells in the *adult* brain as products of 'adult neurogenesis', that the idea of the potential reparability of the brain, in a similar way to other tissues, became documented. What's more, 'neural stem cell therapy' continues to be at the pinnacle of neuroscientific research, and hopes are still raised for potential stem cell therapies for the treatment of many illnesses, particularly neurodegenerative diseases.[7]

Fundamental Research

'Fundamental research' is not easily defined; to define it as 'basic' research somehow degrades the complexity, inquisitiveness and understanding that is required for such experimentation, analysis and observation. Neuroscience thrives on fundamental, laboratory research – that is, research that may not immediately be able to be used at a clinical level, but that explores basic neural mechanisms and nourishes the foundations upon which knowledge can expand. Fundamental research, by allowing us to refute or support theories, no matter how simple or complex, can support progress in every subdivision of Neuroscience, thereby allowing expansion of principles, theories and ideas.

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[5]Temple (2001) The development of Neural stem cells. *Nature* 414: 112-117

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Bearing in mind that the communication between *two* neurons alone is incredibly complex, owing to the myriad factors that come into play to alter the inputs and outputs of the cell signalling, then viewed on the grander scale of entire neuronal networks one may begin to understand why the brain is not readily understood. It is still an unknown, particularly when you consider that not all neurons of the brain have been mapped, or even identified. Indeed, as another Nobel laureate stated, 'The brain is a world consisting of a number of unexplored continents and great stretches of unknown territory'.[8] What's more, it would appear that the more we discover about the brain and the neural connectivity of which it consists, the more questions we need to ask. For example, 'synaptic plasticity' is often used to refer to a change in synaptic signalling, but this perhaps portrays an inaccurate picture, particularly since we do not yet wholly understand all aspects of changes in synaptic signalling and how this affects networks as a whole. It is postulated that memories are a result of changes in synaptic plasticity – or more specifically, a strengthened synaptic communication, based upon a plethora of case studies and research experiments. Yet exactly how or why particular changes occur in relation to a function is still to be addressed. There is also the risk of assuming that all alterations in neural communication fall under the same umbrella. One must not presume that a change in one neuron will be the same as a change in another. How an individual neuron signals within a network is unique, and these unique, intricate signalling patterns may change spatially (perhaps new synaptic connections will be made) and/or temporally (perhaps the communication rate will increase or decrease, altering the neuronal firing patterns over time), ever increasing the diversity. It is incredibly important to investigate neuronal activity and changes in neural communication, but also to be aware that the observed changes may be unique to particular neurons, particular conditions, and particular individuals. Subpopulations of neurons may have unique characteristics – for example, neurons can be classified according to their electrophysiological properties (how quickly they fire their electrical signals), or according to their chemical makeup (the neurotransmitters that they manufacture and release) – so to presume that one neuron's function can be extrapolated to another, or to the brain as whole, smacks of over-simplification. For this reason alone, fundamental research remains at the peak of all subdivisions of neuroscience – it *is* necessary to investigate *specific* neurons at an individual or basic level, in order to first understand their individual underlying mechanisms before attempting to obtain any bigger picture. Such research may be cellular (such as investigating the activity of a single neuron), molecular (investigating

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[8]Santiago Ramon y Cajal (1906), Nobel prize in Medicine speech.

how molecules such as proteins may interact within a single neuron), or may involve observing neurons as a system (the interaction between two or more neurons). All of this will require in-depth understanding prior to their conversion 'from bench to bedside' through clinical translational research, utilising the knowledge obtained from fundamental research to produce novel drugs, therapies and treatments which can then be used within a clinical setting.

What I study, and why

In order to demonstrate the importance of fundamental research, I will use my own work as an example. Recently, two regions of the adult brain have been identified as being the source of new neurons – the subventricular zone, lining the lateral ventricles, and the subgranular zone of the dentate gyrus of the hippocampus. I am investigating particular groups of neurons that appear to be implicated in adult neurogenesis based upon their location in the adult brain, since they are located at the subventricular zone, and seem to follow the typical migration pathway taken by newborn cells originating in this region of the adult brain. Interestingly, some of the neurons on which I am focusing my studies may also be synaptically active – that is, they have the correct morphological features to be able to form synaptic connections with other neurons – and my task is to investigate this communication, in an attempt to determine what these neurons do, and why. Furthermore, the neurons of interest are located in regions of the brain that are documented to have high levels of synaptic plasticity, suggesting that the neurons may be implicated in processes that require changes in synaptic signalling efficacy. Experimentally, I am able to visualise these particular populations of neurons in each specific region of the brain. Such methodology incorporates the use of antibodies, which detect particular proteins within the neurons and are then viewed under the microscope. Using such methods, I can investigate the interactions that a population of cells may have with other neurons. Protein markers for the presence of synapses, or molecules implicated in a particular type of signalling, can be detected using such labelled antibodies, perhaps to observe neuronal communication, or the type of communication that occurs. By establishing such details, and comparing results with already defined neuronal markers, the properties of previously uncharacterized neurons can eventually be determined.

Every branch of Neuroscience, or indeed science in general, requires a certain level of fundamental, basic research before any progression can be made. Advances are typically made following a discovery, and therefore all knowledge thrives on basic detail that accumulates over time, to eventually allow a greater

understanding of the whole. Fundamental research does require constant curiosity and an inquisitive mind, and it is important to be aware that in the grand scheme of things, every little counts. Donald Rumsfeld's statement regarding 'known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns' perfectly captures the state in which neuroscientific research still finds itself, and this situation is likely to continue for as long as research is carried out. As a curious and inquisitive research student, I am in pursuit of (some!) known unknowns, and possibly along the way I might be lucky enough to discover an unknown unknown. From my point of view, the best outcome of my research would be if the function of the uncharacterised neurons that I study, which cause me to ask so many questions on a daily basis, were to become 'known'. Why? Try to imagine the ability to replace neurons which have been destroyed by neurodegeneration such as in Huntington's or Alzheimer's disease. Imagine the ability to therapeutically induce neurogenesis in the brain following a stroke. If the neurons that I study are indeed involved in adult neurogenesis, or the birth of new neurons within the brain, then clinically, their implications could be massive. For this reason alone, I strongly believe that fundamental research is priceless.

Romance: A Gendered Genre

Kira Rose[*]

Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

This paper explores gendered narratives in A.S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*. While Byatt does not see herself as a 'feminist' writer, her fiction speaks to her preoccupation with the complexities of women's lives. In the first part of this paper, I consider how Byatt's Victorian poetess Christabel LaMotte contends with and reaffirms romance's expectations, arguing that LaMotte stands in for the historical Poetess figure and her tenuous relationship to femininity and creativity. I go on to demonstrate how LaMotte's identification with the mythic Fairy Melusine, and her failed attempt to write an epic poem, reinforce LaMotte as the re-embodiment of the perpetually displaced Poetess.

> Love is the gift that keeps on giving.
>
> – Lauren Berlant

Described as a 'livre de chevet' that drew international readership, A.S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* is conducive to a number of critical approaches ranging from historic to psychoanalytic. It may also be read as an academic version of a 'drugstore romance'.[1] While Byatt's novel resists reductive interpretative approaches, it also serves as a reenactment of the traditional love plot. Thus Byatt reintroduces history to enable critical thinking about the past. Employing nineteenth-century cultural configurations allows the author to suggest how the

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[*]Email: kira.rose@new.ox.ac.uk
[1]Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *A.S. Byatt* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 79: Kelly argues that readers 'may well dwell on the affinities between *Possession* and the classic drugstore romance. It may be an 'academic' version of such romances, but *Possession: A Romance* is capable of satisfying in the same sort of way'; see also Richard Todd, *A.S. Byatt* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), especially 1–2.

present mirrors the past in the interactions of Victorian poets Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte and contemporary scholars Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey. *Possession: A Romance* commences with Roland's discovery of Ash's unfinished letters to an unidentified woman tucked into Vico's *Principi di una Scienza Nuova*. Upon determining LaMotte as their intended recipient, Roland approaches LaMotte scholar Maud with the information, and the two set out on a quest to uncover the Victorian poets' love affair. In the process, they commence their own modern romance.

Repetition is inherent in the parallel love narratives of *Possession: A Romance*, where historically transmitted myths are rearticulated in the present. While critics have pinpointed romantic repetitions, they have failed to differentiate between Byatt's Victorian male and female poets' experience of the same phenomenon.[2] Byatt's Victorian poetess Christabel LaMotte, who stands in for the gendered figure of the Poetess, is trapped within a conventional romantic plot and embodies this historical type's complex relationship to femininity and creativity.

While writing *Possession*, Byatt may have had historical characterizations of the Poetess figure in mind. In contrast to the poet, the Poetess is repeatedly designated as a historical type, whose 'proper place in culture is a perpetual displacement, the very means of cultural production'.[3] The rapidly increasing circulation of women's texts in the nineteenth century went hand in hand with the commodification of the female body. Paradoxically, separations between the marketplace and the domestic realm were rigidly enforced by rhetoric associating beauty and poetry 'with a specifically female domain separate from the material concerns of the marketplace'.[4] According to Brown in her discussion of the Victorian Poetess, the feminization of poetry created associations between 'the poetess and altruism, domesticity, sentimentality and indeed spirituality', which

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[2]Jackie Buxton, for example, describes *Possession* as 'hardly a subversive text' and, asserting that the novel conforms to a conventional romance narrative, assumes that characters' experience of love is mutually liberating; see "'What's love got to do with it?": Postmodernism and *Possession'*, *Essays on The Fiction of A.S. Byatt*, eds. Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 101.

[3]Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, 'Lyrical Studies', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 522; a common argument leveled against women's poetry was that of (non)representation. Ironically, such criticism was accompanied by accusations aimed at the overly sentimental disposition of women's lyrics. Prins and Jackson correctly point out that contemporary feminists often overlook the subtle distinction between women's poetry that reflects on the *universal* self versus that which reflects on *their* ('woman's') self; often, this distinction can be located in the *same* poem.

[4]Susan Brown, 'The Victorian Poetess', *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 181–182, 188.

were opposed to the virility and productivity of masculinity. Other critics in
'Poetess' studies further argue that the specifically gendered figure of the Poetess
was marked by 'an absence of self', endowing this feminine – not to be confused
with 'female' – figure and her poetry with impersonal cultural mobility.[5]

In this paper, I suggest that Byatt's novel participates in generic critical
discourse about the role of the Poetess and subverts patriarchal structures by
fashioning a Poetess, Christabel LaMotte, whose attempts to write around male-
centered language showcase her distinct poetic voice. I examine excerpts from
correspondence in the novel to demonstrate how Byatt engages the Poetess'
tenuous role and her gendered creative output. Thus we come to recognize the
repetition of romance inherent in Poetess poetics and in Byatt's representation of
Victorian men's and women's differential experiences of romance.

The second half of this paper addresses LaMotte's ambiguous identification
with the mythic Fairy Melusine, and how her failed attempt to write an epic
poem about this creature reinforces the Poetess' indeterminate relationship to
writing and femininity.[6] My goal is to demonstrate that Randolph Henry Ash's
encouragement of LaMotte's writing is both progressive and naively optimistic.
Byatt exploits the romantic impossibility of women's conflicting desires by
distilling them in the person of LaMotte, the Poetess, emblematic of all poetesses
whose internal Melusines disturb the silence of night and veil themselves in 'wise
utterance' and 'safe conduct' during the day (293).[7]

That Poor, Impersonal Poetess

Christabel LaMotte embodies romance's negative impact on female creativity and
laments the loss of autonomy that accompanies love. In a letter to Ash, LaMotte
indicates how sentimentality directed toward a single object of desire – a man –
curtails female agency. She writes,

> In faith I know not why I am so sad. No – I know – it is that
> you take me out of myself and give me back – diminished – I am
> wet eyes – and touched hands – and lips am I too – a very present –
> famished – fragment of a woman – who has not her desire in truth –

[5]Virginia Jackson and Eliza Richards, '"The Poetess" and Nineteenth-Century American Women
Poets', *Poetess Archive Journal* 1:1 (2007), 4, Web, 1 Feb. 2009.

[6]See Roberta White, *A Studio of One's Own: Fictional Women Painters and the Art of Fiction*
(Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), esp. 19, 21; White's argument about the
depiction of women artists and their work as 'liminal . . . suspended . . . and unfinished' is relevant to
genre's gendered nature in *Possession*.

[7]LaMotte writes, 'O thou, the source of speech / Give me wise utterance and safe conduct'.

and yet has desire superabundantly . . . And you say – so kind you are – 'I love you. I love you.' – and I believe – but who is she – who is 'you'? Is she – fine fair hair and – whatever yearns so – I was once something else – something alone and better – I was sufficient unto my self. . . . (199)

LaMotte pens this letter prior to the consummation of her and Ash's desire. At the beginning of their correspondence, LaMotte's independence apparently enables poetic productivity. She is 'circumscribed and self-communing' and her 'pen is the best of' her (87). A creature of the written word, LaMotte defies convention by living with a female companion, Blanche Glover. Once her love for Ash develops through language, her identity unravels. Writing *to* him makes her creativity dependent *on* him as reader and as beloved. While the letter is written prior to the sexual act, LaMotte writes *as if* she has already been handled and possessed, as if language metaphorically consummates desire, leaving the Poetess grappling with desire for lost self-sufficiency and, simultaneously, desire for the *physical* act. LaMotte's self-expression comes to rely on reciprocity and she explicitly states her desire is not contained in 'truth' but in excess emotion that overwhelms her reality. Shortly afterward, LaMotte accompanies Ash on his travels and their love affair is consummated. After their brief time together, the pregnant Poetess goes to her uncle's home in Brittany to have Ash's baby in secret. Her engagement in the heterosexual world breaks the productive androgyny of her mind and, for a time, she ceases writing.

LaMotte's traumatic experience disrupts her identity, and her outlook on writing and femininity becomes irreparably jaded. In conversation with her cousin Sabine de Kercoz, who documents LaMotte's visit in her journal, LaMotte responds unsympathetically to Sabine's romantic passion for the written word. When Sabine reveals she has 'always' had 'a great desire to be a writer', LaMotte responds, 'Many desire, but few or none succeed . . . I would not recommend it as a way to a contented life' (344). She goes on to tell Sabine's father that, if she were a 'Good Fairy', playing on her feelings of intimate relation to the Fairy Melusine, she would wish Sabine 'a pretty face . . . and a capacity to take pleasure in the quotidian' (344). Her response may be likened to what Melusine would say were she given a voice to reveal her 'self' in writing; LaMotte chides Sabine's ambition for self-sufficiency, unviable for her gender. LaMotte is not incorrect, as we soon find out from Ariane Le Minier, who supplies Maud with a copy of Sabine's journal. In a letter accompanying the journal, Le Minier writes,

Sabine's story after these events is part happy, part sad. She published the three novels . . . of which *La Deuxieme Dahud* is

much the most interesting, and depicts a heroine of powerful will and passions, an imperious mesmeric presence, and a scorn of the conventional female virtues. She is drowned in a boating accident, after having destroyed the peace of two households, and whilst pregnant with a child whose father may be her meek husband or her Byronic lover, who drowns with her . . . She [Sabine] married in 1863, after a prolonged battle with her father to be allowed to meet possible partis. The M. de Kergarouet she married was a dull and melancholic person, considerably older than she was, who became obsessively devoted to her, and died of grief, it was said, a year after she died in her third child-bed. She bore two daughters, neither of whom survived into adolescence. . . . (380)

Permeated by irony and tragedy, this excerpt is Byatt's (perhaps wobbly) tipping of the hat to LaMotte's informed cynicism. Sabine – stubborn, passionate and rebellious toward convention – unconsciously writes a version of her/the Victorian woman's autobiography and then lives it. Sabine writes yet fails by LaMotte's standards: she does not retain independence and experiences a tragic end. Sabine's willfulness does not prevent her characters' engagement in conventions she seeks to subvert via writing: her writing contains a traditional romantic plot entailing mortified femininity, the possibility of adultery and illegitimate conception, and the death of lovers by drowning. Her life story – not much of a deviation – mirrors the amatory plot assumed to be the product of a woman's unwieldy hand. Sabine's biography actualizes her fictional tragedy; she stands in for the Victorian woman in general and the Victorian Poetess in particular.

Le Minier mentions that neither of Sabine's daughters 'survive' into adolescence. Sabine, however, dies in her *third* childbed. This subtle, salient piece of information implies that, while Sabine survives bearing daughters, who die regardless, her third child that may have lived – yet whose birth she could not endure – was a son. The male can be thought of as committing metaphorical murder, killing the female writer while emerging from the womb of her creativity. Sabine's tale inverts the Oedipal myth, and appears to be Byatt's subtle critique of women writers' inability to circumnavigate structures that regulate them and their texts. Sabine's journal is somewhat of a *kunstlerroman*, tracing her variegated development in the presence of her Poetess cousin. Yet Sabine's text, which reveals several things, including her frustration with LaMotte's misery, the latter's denial of her 'condition' (pregnancy) and her refusal to accept help, showcases the Poetess' suspension between myth and reality. The creative agent (the

female writer) operates from the liminal space between utter loss and liberating *jouissance* (pleasure), the latter of which is continually deferred.

LaMotte not only denies her pregnancy until denial becomes impossible, but also fails to notify Ash of her condition. She does not respond to or write letters for many years. When she writes again, Ash's wife, Ellen, receives the letter and refrains from showing it to her dying husband. The letter is buried with the poet and unearthed by academic Mortimer Cropper, whose ambition is to appropriate history. Roland and Maud intercept his grave robbery and the 'good' and 'bad' critics perform a formal reading. In her last missive, LaMotte reiterates the interconnectivity of dispossession and romance:

> Do you remember how I wrote to you of the riddle of the egg? As an eidolon of my solitude and self-possession which you threatened whether you would or no? And destroyed, my dear, meaning me nothing but good, I do believe and know. I wonder – if I had kept to my closed castle, behind my motte-and-bailey defences – should I have been a great poet – as you are? (502)

Again LaMotte emphasizes how love destroyed self-awareness and stifled her potential to become a great poet. She contrasts her lack of greatness with Ash's poetic genius, which she aspires to but cannot match. For LaMotte, isolation enables creativity while love for a man revokes mobility and mutes her poetic voice. The remainder of her life after the affair suffers from love's consequences and imprisons her in discourse and thought involving the other. LaMotte's identity is fragmented in spite of Ash's 'good' intentions. LaMotte indicates that anger has subsided and 'in calm of mind all passion spent' (quoting from Milton's *Samson Agonistes*) she thinks of Ash again with 'clear love' (502). Once passion wanes, romantic love is drained of its damaging power. However, LaMotte does not recover the vitality and autonomy she possessed prior to the love affair. She cannot differentiate between reason and emotion, even when passion has subsided.

By basing Randolph Henry Ash on Robert Browning, whose poetry Byatt believes exemplifies a liberal approach to women's creative output and concerns itself with conversation between men and women, the author underlines her intention to recover and (re)present Victorian women's poetry in a way that fuses its political and aesthetic significance, something contemporary critics continue to struggle with. However, Ash's encouragement of LaMotte's creativity and his insistence that she *preserve* her autonomy are counterbalanced by conventions he naively overlooks when they engage in a love affair. LaMotte, who initially can at least *imagine* her productivity as independent of male progenitors, becomes

thoroughly dependent on expectations of female chastity, silence and self-circumscription outlined by religious, masculinist paradigms that foreground love. LaMotte's identification with the Fairy Melusine and her rewriting of Melusine's tale rearticulates the Poetess' suspended cultural position and her indeterminate relationship to writing.

Shall *Our* Thirsts be Sealed?

> I adore myth ... But I don't like people who
> believe them.
>
> – A.S. Byatt

Melusine's story holds religious and historical significance for romantic relations in the novel. The mermaid/snakewoman/dragon of poet Jean d'Arras' and cleric Couldrette's tales marries the knight Raimondin to gain a connection to the mortal world.[8] Raimondin breaks Melusine's prohibition that he cannot observe her on Saturdays, discovering her deformity and exposing her as a monstrosity. He disrupts her isolation and refigures her self-sufficiency as powerlessness. Undeniably, LaMotte's metamorphosis from independent creative force to a 'witch and banshee, crying in grief around her tower and pronouncing death' echoes Melusine's loss of autonomy.[9] In her final letter, LaMotte *explicitly* compares herself to Melusine, on whom her grand Fairy epic is based. She writes, 'I have been Melusina these thirty years. I have so to speak flown about and about the battlements of this stronghold crying on the wind of my need to see and feed and comfort my child, who knew me not' (501). This parallel reintroduces tensions between female independence and her domestication and shows how confinement by 'women's culture' of sentiment is something women often *choose* to suffer for fear of facing the world outside the domestic 'stronghold'.

LaMotte's reading of the Melusine myth is an example of Byatt invoking poetics to underline the Poetess as a gendered generic figure. The author pinpoints the Poetess as a textually identifiable type; LaMotte re-embodies this type through her relation to Melusine. Her poem is a series of circular subversions that reestablish LaMotte as representative of the empty Poetess figure, continually

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[8]Gillian M.E. Alban illustrates how marriage allows Melusine to bind herself to convention and to 'escape her liminal, succubus, or spirit state'; see *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A.S. Byatt's* Possession *and in Mythology* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), esp. 18.

[9]Alban, *Melusine the Serpent Goddess*, 26; see also Jeannette King, 'Gender and Poetry: A.S. Byatt's *The Conjugial Angel*', *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction*, by King (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) for a salutary discussion of Byatt's attitude toward gender, poetry and romantic love.

re-inhabited by women who only traverse the darkness outside the homestead *if* promised a warm, Christian bed.

In their correspondence, LaMotte mentions to Ash her wish to compose an 'epic' about Melusine. She writes,

> I have it in my head to write an epic – or if not an epic, still a Saga or Lay or great mythical Poem – and how can a poor breathless woman with no staying-power and only a Lunar Learning confess such an ambition to the author of the *Ragnarok*? But I have the most curious certainty that you are to be trusted in this matter – that you will not mock – nor deluge the fairy of the fountain with Cold Water. . . . (161)

LaMotte expresses her 'male' ambition to Ash in secret because she is aware that her desire to contribute to a male genre subverts norms. Byatt parodies the Victorian vision of women as frail, 'breathless' beings while simultaneously permitting LaMotte to position herself *as* such a being, driven by precipitous aspirations beyond her reach. This passage may be read either ironically or literally. Regardless, Ash responds encouragingly:

> You are a Poet and in the end must care only for your own views – why not an Epic? Why not a mythic drama in twelve books? I can see no reason in Nature why a woman might not write such a poem as well as a man – if she but set her mind to it. (165)

Ash's emphasis on nature's lack of prohibitions against women's creativity points to the unspoken opposition between nature and patriarchal religion, where the former is subsumed by the latter, thus sanctioning the privileging of the male cogito.[10] However, Ash rejects gender differences, telling LaMotte that pure imagination, free of artificial constraints, ensures poetic productivity. In an earlier letter, LaMotte implicitly identifies with Melusine's history in her discussion of women in connection with towers. Requesting that Ash 'not kindly seek to ameliorate or steal away' her 'solitude', LaMotte writes:

> It is a thing we women are taught to dread – oh the terrible tower, oh the thickets round it – no companionable Nest – but a donjon

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[10]Byatt's interests in spirituality and manmade myths lead her to reinscribe Milton by having characters ventriloquize *Paradise Lost*; see Susan E. Colon, 'The Possession of Paradise: A.S. Byatt's Reinscription of Milton', *Christianity and Literature* 53 (2003), Web, 1 Feb. 2009; Colon argues that Ash's reworking of Milton allows Byatt to contrast the former's progressive ideology with the latter's archaic treatment of the 'origin' narrative. Ash's approach – *à la* Vico – *is* 'scientific' and 'progressive' but also conforms to religious narratives by consciously reiterating them. Through Ash, Byatt grapples with history and does *not* conclude Milton is outdated.

> . . . But they have lied to us you know, in this, as in so much else. The Donjon may frown and threaten – *but* it keeps us very *safe* – *within* its confines we are free in a way you, who have freedom to range the world, do not need to imagine. (137)

Paradoxically, LaMotte longs for this isolating tower, refigured as a liberating prison in which women can create shut off from 'human' desires. Melusine dreams of this dark, 'terrible tower' while frantically flying about the battlements, eternally suspended in isolating air. Yet the latter's tower contains the promise of mortality and domesticity, and of a conventional 'human' life. The ambiguous relationship between 'woman' and tower – where 'tower', a masculine symbol, also figures as dispossessed femininity – is the ultimate source of LaMotte's frustrated efforts to exercise her imagination like a man, free 'to range the world'. Thus Ash's advice that she *write* like a man is emptied of its liberating potential. In light of LaMotte's dilemma, his advice seems naively progressive, even inhumane.

Tellingly, LaMotte observes that she intends to write from Melusine's point of view and not 'in the first Person – as inhabiting her skin – but seeing her an unfortunate Creature – of Power and Frailty – always in fear of returning to the Ranging of the Air – the not-eternal – but finally-annihilated – Air' (174). Her fragmented language underlines the impossibility of LaMotte's undertaking. The Poetess wishes to write 'from Melusina's-own-vision' without 'inhabiting her skin'. Firstly, writing *from* Melusine's 'vision' is concomitant with writing *as* Melusine. Secondly, LaMotte's intention prefigures how her textual attempt to escape association with Melusine will be circular. Melusine's story mirrors LaMotte's, just as the transparent skin of language contains both women's mythic identities. Melusine's fear of the annihilating air outside the domestic 'keep' is LaMotte's dread of loneliness and damnation, and of eternal suspension between 'Power' and 'Frailty'.

Ash's letter to LaMotte provides insight into Melusine's background. Ash aligns Melusine with Paracelsus' 'minor spirits doomed to inhabit the regions of the air who wander the earth perpetually and whom we might, from time to time, exceptionally, hear or see, when the wind, or the trick of the light, is right' (171). Thus Ash sets up how Melusine is perceived by men in LaMotte's poem – that is, *when* she is perceived. He transcribes Paracelsus' passage:

> The Melusinas are daughters of kings, desperate through their sins. Satan bore them away and transformed them into spectres, into evil spirits, into horrible revenants and frightful monsters. It is thought they live without rational souls in fantastic bodies, that they

are nourished by the mere elements, and at the final Judgment will pass with these, unless they may be married to a man. In this case, by virtue of this union, they may die a natural death, as they may have lived a natural life, in their marriage. Of these spectres it is believed that they abound in deserts, in forests, in ruins and tombs, in empty vaults, and by the shores of the sea. ... (171)

This description summarizes Melusine's tragic fate, reiterated and defied by LaMotte's poem. Melusine's story is reiterated because the Poetess defers to how *men* view and write about her; it is defied because LaMotte proffers an alternate reading of femininity that counters how men view Melusine. However, her reading cannot stand up to conventions on which the Poetess, like her Melusine, relies.

LaMotte begins her epic with, 'And what was she, the Fairy Melusine?' (289). The poem explores this question through contextualization and juxtaposition. Whom does this question address? Is it rhetorical? LaMotte does not ask *who* Melusine is but *what* she is, prefacing the poem with her subject's immediate depersonalization. It soon becomes evident that Melusine's history is that of hearsay. *Men* describe her as a 'long flying worm, whose sinewy tail / And leather pinions beat the parted sky' around the 'castle-keep' and whose laments resound on the wind. A monstrous, piteous creature that makes its spectral appearance at the deathbeds of Lords of Lusignan, Melusine is polyphonous – her cry is that of every abandoned, ghostly woman banished from the homestead – and indeterminate, an alien 'Thing', 'Half-sable serpent, half a mourning Queen' that vanishes once dying men make peace with God; she is forever denied access to *his* Name and *his* kingdom.

LaMotte converts Melusine into the surrogate mother of 'innocent' boys whose sleeping forms she suckles at night and who glean strength from foreign milk that mingles 'warm tears' with 'sweet and salt' (289). She is deprived of the pleasures of motherhood and banished from the household while men procure the spoils of her womanhood in their dreams. LaMotte juxtaposes the ambiguity of what Melusine is and represents with how she has been *explained* by men who rationalize the universe's mysteries by defining them in terms of divine incomprehensibility. Men's accounts enable the Poetess to situate her discussion of Melusine as a social critique. Quoting men bolsters the poem's irony. LaMotte first quotes John of Arras, who writes that King David interpreted the Lord's judgments as 'vast deeps' in which the soul 'spins' and where the mind is 'engulfed' by what it cannot understand (290). From this, Arras concludes that a man's mind should not overexert itself in matters that exceed the bounds of his

reason. The 'good monk' defers to Aristotle, who 'told the truth' when asserting that the world contains both visible and invisible 'Both in their kind'. Thus the presence of the 'invisible' is justified by religious dogma and by the 'Creator's Power . . . revealed from time to time in Books / Writ by wise men . . . ' (291).

The 'brave' Monk and Paracelsus describe these 'invisibles' or once 'Angels' as 'neither damned nor blessed', but eternally caught between heaven and earth in perpetual volatility. By embodying and escaping dichotomies, these beings exemplify excess *and* cannot be the multitudes they contain. LaMotte covertly lashes out at 'wise' and 'brave' men who rationalize and feminize the universe's mysteries, reformulating their sentiments as a string of questions: 'What are they / Who haunt our dreams and weaken our desires / And turn us from the solid face of things? / Sisters of Horror, or Heav'n's exiled queens / Reduced from spirit-power to fantasy?' (291).

LaMotte's query leads into a segment of text that unveils the earthly nature of her metaphysical juxtaposition: it is not that of Angels and monsters, the explicable and inexplicable, the familiar and uncanny. It is that of men and women:

> The Angels of the Lord, from Heaven's Gate
> March helmeted in gold and silver ranks
> Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
> As quick as thought between desire and need.
> They are the instruments of Law and Grace.
> Then who are those who wander indirect
> Those whose desires mount precipice of Air
> As easy as say wink, or plunge again
> For pleasure of the terror in the cleft
> Between the dark brow of a mounting cloud
> And plain sky's opal ocean? Who are they
> Whose soft hands cannot shift the fixed chains
> Of cause and law that binds the earth and sea
> And ice and fire and flesh and blood and time? (291–292)

Men, occupying the privileged position of God's Angels, are armed with intentionality. Through war and conquest justified by 'Law' and 'Grace', they mold their world into the shape of their desires. Women, the inferior breed, are exiled from man's world and fated to face nature's elements as expressions of God's divine authority, a portion of which was bestowed on Man alone. Man's power is permissible, yet 'let the Power take a female form / And 'tis the Power is punished' (292). LaMotte proffers examples including Medusa,

Scylla, Hydra, the siren and the Sphinx: all reduced, maimed, or exterminated by man who 'named Himself' in order to subjugate his 'Questioner'.[11] Thus LaMotte sets up how she will reclaim agency to question man's superiority through *her* textualization of experience, and how she will retell the tale of a woman's insatiable power and desire in *her* own words rather than those of 'wise' men.

LaMotte reiterates, 'And what was she, the Fairy Melusine?' (292). Posed again, her question is marked by sarcasm. Are the aforementioned monstrosities Melusina's 'kin'? Or are they 'her kind / *More kind* [my emphasis], those rapid wanderers of the dark / Who in dreamlight, or twilight, or no light / Are lovely Mysteries and promise gifts . . .' (292)? Not only does LaMotte invert gender distinctions that underlie power relations. She ascribes more humane qualities to the liminal and oppressed than to the 'liberating' oppressor. Her maneuver is more rebellious than is immediately discernible: by restoring the invisible to visibility and by inverting the center and the margins, LaMotte reduces and displaces not only man as supreme authority but God *him*self.

Yet the Poetess' bravery is immediately countered by uncertainty when these 'Bright monsters' of sea and sky 'vanish in the light of rational day / Doomed by their own desire for human souls, / For settled hearths and fixed human homes' (293). The 'rational' hegemonic world requires mystery's demystification. Like the monsters they are likened to, women must recede into the night to chasten themselves for 'rational' desires encoded as necessities. They must be (hu)man: sacrifice tears, milk, and blood for man's continuance and to submit to unperturbed domesticity.[12] Melusine is the metaphor through which women's displacement is brought to the fore.

LaMotte questions her authority to 'tell the Fairy's tale', amalgamating the classical opening of an epic narrative with the irony of its authorship (293). Wondering if it is in her *right* to 'Meddle with doom and magic in my song / Or venture out into the shadowland / Beyond the safe and solid', she invokes female spirits and ancient goddesses to guide her journey away from the rational world into the unknown. LaMotte requests the power to reach into her mind, to defy temporality, and to write out of the darkness that preceded creation when all

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[11] See Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), esp. 354: 'They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss'.

[12] The unnatural union between Melusine and Raimondin results in malformed children; LaMotte writes to Ash, '*I am interested in other visions of the fairy* Melusine – who *has two* aspects – an Unnatural *Monster* – and a most proud and loving and handy woman . . . Her Progeny it is true all had something of the monstrous about them' (174).

was equanimitous and identical in its nonexistence:

> O Memory, who holds the thread that links
> My modern mind to those of ancient days
> To the dark dreaming origins of our race,
> When visible and invisible alike
> Lay quietly, O thou, the source of speech
> Give me wise utterance and safe conduct
> From hearthside storytelling into dark
> Of outer air, and back again to sleep,
> In Christian comfort, in a decent bed. (293)

LaMotte's epic invocation to the muse to animate memory and revivify an ahistoric moment establishes fatal links between past and present, circumscribing her narrative. Rather than requesting that the 'source of speech', the mind, provide her with agency to *avoid* 'wise utterance' and 'safe conduct', characteristic of 'women's' language, she asks these very things to *guide* her efforts and return her from the dark unknown to the domestic 'hearthside' to 'sleep, / In Christian comfort, in a decent bed'. LaMotte's narrative is delimited by its circularity and her attempt to provide Melusine, and the Poetess figure, with agency fails.

As I have demonstrated, not only is LaMotte pigeonholed by the society in which she lives, which assigns her the role of Poetess whether she likes it or not, but she inevitably performs this role in her 'epic' poem, which can never *be* an epic. Beyond language's romance of impossibility, we see the Poetess' inescapable affiliation with a serpent-woman neither subject nor object, neither visible nor invisible, forever trapped between ambivalent definitions of 'femininity' as either excessive or simply irrelevant.

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