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# A Novel Consciousness

## A Practical Exploration of Fiction's Capacity

## to Represent Deafblindness

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Penelope Jane Rudge, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others this is always clearly stated.

Signed: *P. J. Rudge*

Date: *1st March 2016*

**Abstract**

Dual sensory impairment or 'deafblindness' imposes a special quality of engagement between the self and the social world. Yet novels, which specialise in the exploration of human subjectivity, have failed spectacularly to capture this. This thesis analyses the gap in representation and investigates narrative techniques that offer the potential to better represent the particularity of the experience. To achieve this, it takes a multidisciplinary approach that brings together research into literature, disability, consciousness, psychology and linguistics in order to construct a revised understanding of sensory loss and its place within the diversity of human experience.

The first chapter shows that Western literature has an overwhelming propensity to use motifs of deafness and bllndness for metaphorical effect. Further, through a politicised disability studies analysis, this chapter identifies mechanisms by which such an onslaught of fictional depictions does not merely reflect but actively shapes unhelpful attitudes towards deaf and blind people in life. As a result, a new attitudinal model of classification is proposed, whereby disability tropes are framed according to their determining (and explicitly prejudicial) sociocultural attitudes rather than by the resulting constructs of symbolised defect.

The second chapter builds on this analysis in order to suggest a way forward. It examines innovative techniques of rendering consciousness that were pioneered by Henry James and Virginia Woolf and considers how these might be adapted to a deafblind context. In the process, it draws upon a related enquiry, laid out in the appendix, into why consciousness has the potential to be structurally different for a deafblind person.

The third chapter then assesses the thesis-writer's own creative engagement with representing deafblindness. It reports on a process of experimentation with the narrative methods outlined in Chapter 2 and discusses the adaptations and reformulations that ensued. Finally, an extract from the resulting work, a novel titled *Kindness is a* Language, completes the thesis.

**Preface**

I dedicate this thesis to my family with my love and appreciation.

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# Introduction

In 1887, Helen Keller, six years old and unable either to hear or see, made a now-famous breakthrough into the world of meaning:

> Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten — a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.[1]

Keller's experience underlines the closeness of the relationship between language and the senses. Her use of *mystery* may be understood in two ways: that language is a puzzle to be logically decoded; or that it is akin to a religious belief, incomprehensible to reason and knowable only through divine revelation. In his preface to the Random House Modern Library edition of Keller's book, James Berger draws upon both interpretations when he uses work by evolutionary biologist Terrence Deacon in order to explain how, in this moment at the well, Keller moved from a budding indexical use of language to a symbolic one.[2] Berger highlights Deacon's argument that many animals and birds use a variety of indexical signs, such as cries to warn of predators; but that symbolic communication requires a higher order of thinking, the capacity for which co-evolved in the human brain with the use of language.[3] An *index* 'points to a particular object at a particular moment, and is never used in the absence of that object', whereas a *symbol* 'is not fixed to only one object or meaning, […] [and] can make puns, abstractions, fictions and lies'.[4] Before coming to the well that day, Keller had begun to learn the names of objects. These were painstakingly finger-spelled on to her hand by her mentor Anne Sullivan, using a manual alphabet, but Keller was baffled by the reappearance of words in a different context. Thus, the water that she habitually drank from her mug was '"mug-of-

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[1] Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life: The Restored Edition* (New York and Toronto: Random House, 2004), pp. 20–21.

[2] James Berger, 'Editor's Preface', in *The Story of My Life,* pp. vii–xxxvi (p. xii).

[3] Terrence W. Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*: *The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York and London: Norton, 1997). As Berger notes, Deacon's terminology is adapted from Charles Sanders Peirce's three types of sign: icon, index, symbol. The icon, more elementary than the other two types of sign, 'stands for exactly what it is'; it contains some element of the thing it represents. Berger, p. xxxii (footnote 8). I discuss Peirce's terminology in section 1.4.4.

[4] Berger, p. xii.

water". Water in some other context must require some other sign'.[5] By learning a small vocabulary of nouns, Keller had begun decoding the logical puzzle of language; but when the familiar signal for her drinking water was combined with the tactile rush of well-water over her hand, she experienced a revelation that catapulted her into understanding 'both the particularity and the generality of language'.[6] From this moment — 'my soul's sudden awakening' as Keller called it, reinforcing the sense of a divine intervention — her ability to generalise and conceptualise burgeoned.[7] While Keller was pondering her answer to some difficult question, Sullivan spelled the word *think* on her forehead: 'In a flash I knew that the word was the name of the process that was going on in my head. This was my first conscious perception of an abstract idea'.[8]

The 'Supplementary Account', written by Keller's first editor John Macy and published together with *The Story of My Life,* contains material from a report by Anne Sullivan to the Perkins Institution for the Blind in 1888.[9] Sullivan noted: 'I am constantly asked the question "How did you teach her the meaning of words expressive of intellectual and moral qualities?" I believe it was more through association and repetition than through any explanation of mine'.[10] Observing Keller's fifteen-month-old cousin, who, like most children at that stage of language development, was surrounded by speech and could therefore understand a great deal without being able yet to speak, Sullivan resolved to use the same approach with Keller and fill her days with language by constantly finger-spelling complete sentences to her, always appropriate to the physical context, and without worrying about whether Keller could yet understand them. She thus rejected 'all elaborate and special systems of education', which she felt treated a deaf child as 'a kind of idiot who must be taught to think'.[11] Through this 'natural method', as John Macy called it, Keller's grasp of vocabulary, grammar and abstraction blossomed like that of any other child but through a tactile rather

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[5] Ibid, p. xiii.

[6] Ibid, p. xiii.

[7] *The Story of My Life,* p. 21.

[8] Ibid, p. 26.

[9] John Macy, 'A Supplementary Account of Helen Keller's Life and Education', in *The Story of My Life,* pp. 197-316. Macy was an author and literary critic who became a close friend of both Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. He was the original editor of *The Story of My Life,* and married Anne Sullivan in 1905, although the marriage later broke down. For biographical details of all three, see Dorothy Hermann, *Helen Keller* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[10] Macy*,* p. 269.

[11] Ibid*,* p. 233.

than a spoken form of communication.[12] Other deaf children were rarely so fortunate: the restrictive and artificial teaching methods of the time placed a barrier between them and language acquisition; a state of affairs that Anne Sullivan witnessed when visiting a school for the deaf with Keller in 1888. Afterwards, she wrote to a friend that she was 'incredulous' at the poor linguistic ability of the deaf children and attributed this to the 'mechanical and difficult' teaching methods: 'Nothing, I think, crushes the child's impulse to talk naturally more effectually than these blackboard exercises.'[13] Even today, the path to effective education is not straightforward, as a review of the advice given by charities specialising in sensory loss shows. Sense, a UK charity for deafblind people, describes navigating the education system as 'complicated and off-putting'.[14]

Even where educational opportunity is sufficient, the potential for free communication is nevertheless distorted by entrenched misconceptions and misrepresentations of blindness and deafness. In Chapter 1, I show how fictional literature has both reflected such prejudices and actively contributed to their creation. Here, I follow the lead of David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, who have described the way in which literary narratives treat people with disabilities as 'an opportunistic metaphoric device'.[15] Thus, 'the characterization of disability provides a means through which literature performs its social critique while simultaneously sedimenting stigmatizing beliefs about people with disabilities'.[16] From this standpoint, I apply Lennard Davis's method of shifting focus from the construction of disability to the construction of normalcy: 'the "problem" is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to

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[12] In the 'Education' section of his original 'Supplementary Account', Macy explains that 'Miss Sullivan was working out a natural method, which is so simple, so lacking in artificial system, that her method seems rather to be a destruction of method'. Although Berger refers to this comment in his own 'Editor's Preface' to the 2004 edition, he chose to omit it from the text. However, it can be found in the original 1903 edition (New York: Doubleday), p. 379.
[13] Macy, p. 263.
[14] 'About deafblindness: Children and young people', *Sense* (23 March 2012) <http://www.sense.org.uk/content/children-and-young-people> [accessed 27 February 2016]
[15] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 47.
[16] David T. Mitchell, 'Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor', in *Disability Studies, Enabling the Humanities*, ed. by Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), pp. 15–30 (p. 24).

create the "problem" of the disabled person'.[17] Here, I make the same caveat as Davis: many Deaf people consider themselves a culturally distinct group that uses sign language instead of speech; not disabled, but a linguistic minority. Davis follows general practice by defining the 'Deaf' as 'that community of deaf people who share language, cultural values, history, and social life'; whereas 'deaf' people are 'simply those who do not hear'.[18] However, as Douglas Baynton points out, despite this self-identification Deaf people are still subject to the disabling effects of societal barriers and prejudice, so that it is 'entirely possible for Deaf people to be both a distinct cultural group and disabled'.[19] I see no reason to inflict labels upon the unwilling and therefore within this thesis I use 'deaf' to indicate all those with a hearing impairment, without intending to imply that this in itself must constitute a disability. When referring to an individual like Helen Keller with significant damage to both sight and hearing, even in cases where such damage is not total, nor even profound, I shall use the terms 'deafblind' or 'dual sensory impaired'. Although there is no standardised definition for these terms, a generally accepted working description is used by the UK Department of Health: people are considered deafblind 'if their combined sight and hearing impairment causes difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility'. Furthermore:

> The term 'dual sensory loss' can be used interchangeably with Deafblindness denoting the fact that combined losses of sight and hearing are significant for the individual even where they are not profoundly deaf and totally blind. It is the way in which one sensory impairment impacts upon, or compounds the second impairment, which causes the difficulties, even if, taken separately, each single sensory impairment appears relatively mild.[20]

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[17] Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), p. 24.

[18] Ibid*,* p. 100. Thus, Deaf does not completely overlap with deaf: one can be part of the Deaf community without having a hearing impairment. For example, Davis himself is fully hearing but, as the child of Deaf adults, he could Sign before he could speak: 'I I grew up in a Deaf world, in a Deaf culture, and with a Deaf sensibility. […] I consider myself similar to people who have grown up in a bicultural family.' (p. xvii.)

[19] Douglas C. Baynton, 'Beyond Culture: Deaf Studies and the Deaf Body', in *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 293–313 (p. 297).

[20] 'Care and Support for Deafblind Children and Adults Policy Guidance', *Mental Health Disability Intelligence Unit, Department of Health, Great Britain*, (December 2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3

I shall also use 'dual sensory loss' with the same meaning. However, when I am discussing the wider subject of impairment relating to either or both of these senses, I will use the terms 'sensory impairment' or 'sensory loss'. Only the senses of sight and hearing are discussed in this thesis. Losses to the senses of taste, smell or touch are not connected to language in the same fundamental way: no special access or educational methods are required to teach language to children born without these senses, and therefore they will not be covered here.

Having clarified these terms, I return to Davis who calls for further study of the 'issues about representation, communication, language, ideology'.[21] He points out that 'those who pay attention to art and cultural production have really thought very little about the way in which such endeavors are based on normative practices that imply a normative body and normative communication'.[22] The first chapter of my thesis responds to this. Here, I look in greater detail at how writers have absorbed and replicated unhelpful assumptions about sensory loss through the use of tropes that associate it with a range of noncontingent themes. Although I have a particular interest in deafblindness, most of the quotations and examples in this chapter come from fictions that deal with either deafness or blindness because only a limited number reference dual impairment. The tropes that I identify also proliferate within drama, poetry and film, but in this thesis I concentrate on novels in particular. I do so because not only do I believe that the experience of blind and deaf people has been obscured by an overwhelmingly metaphorical use of 'blindness' and 'deafness' in literature; but I also range myself with David Lodge, amongst others, in considering the novel to be the literary form that should be most suited to representing that experience:

> […] literature is a record of human consciousness, the richest and most comprehensive we have. [...] The novel is arguably man's most successful effort to describe the experience of individual human beings moving through space and time. [...] Works of literature describe in the guise of fiction the dense specificity of personal experience, which is always unique, because each of us has a slightly or very different

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88198/Care_and_Support_for_Deafblind_Children_and_Adults_Policy_Guidanc e_12_12_14_FINAL.pdf>s> [accessed 27 February 2016] (p. 5.)
[21] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, p. 124.
[22] Ibid*,* pp. 124–25.

> personal history, modifying every new experience we have; and the
> creation of literary texts recapitulates this uniqueness [...].[23]

Thus, it is within novels that the failure of representation is most glaring. Lodge goes on elegantly to restate an argument put forward by both neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1999) and literary historian Ian Watt (1957): that the birth of the novel in the seventeenth century corresponded with philosophy's new focus on what we now call consciousness.[24] As Lodge puts it, in both literature and philosophy there was 'a new emphasis on the interiority of experience'.[25]

Interiority implies separateness, but it does not confer isolation. In fact, the opposite is true. To shape conceptual thoughts, we need language, and in order to learn language, we need to communicate with others.[26] For a profoundly deafblind child such as Helen Keller, the entry into language is hard-won. For others with less severe losses, it may require less assistance; while for the majority of children who are born fully hearing and fully sighted, it is a knowledge unconsciously absorbed through hearing language spoken and observing the context.[27] But whether absorbed, acquired or won, this entry is only the

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[23] David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 10–11.

[24] See Damasio: 'The preoccupation with what we call consciousness now is recent — three and a half centuries perhaps — and has only come to the fore in the late twentieth century.' Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 231. Also Watt: 'that vast transformation of Western civilization since the Renaissance which has replaced the unified world picture of the Middle Ages with another very different one — […] a developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places'. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding,* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 31.

[25] Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, p 39.

[26] From his work with children like 'Joseph', eleven years old and totally without language as a result of his deafness and social isolation, Oliver Sacks concludes 'It is clear that thought and language have quite separate (biological) origins, that the world is examined and mapped and responded to long before the advent of language, that there is a huge range of thinking — in animals or infants — long before the emergence of language. […] A human being is not mindless or mentally deficient without language, but he is severely restricted in the range of his thoughts, confined in effect, to an immediate, small world.' *Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf* (London: Picador, 1991), p. 40.

[27] It is important to note that the barriers to language-acquisition are not internal: sensory loss does not interfere with the brain's capacity for language. The barriers are societal: thus a child, hearing or deaf, with Deaf parents will acquire sign language as naturally as a hearing child with hearing parents learns to speak. But for a hearing child with Deaf parents to learn spoken language or a deaf child with hearing parents to learn sign language, dedicated attention is required. A deafblind child in a community where tactile language was the

beginning. Now that experience can be shared, it is also forever mediated; blurring the distinction between personal, direct experience and that drawn from the retellings of others. As her ability to conceptualise developed, Helen Keller felt 'invisible lines stretched between my spirit and the spirits of others'.[28] Thus, after learning to read she found that 'I cannot be quite sure of the boundary line between my ideas and those I find in books. I suppose that is because so many of my impressions come to me through the medium of others' eyes and ears.'[29] In this context, Berger notes the facility with which Keller uses purely visual terms such as the names of different colours, which must only be abstractions to her: 'Yet, she could refer to "red" and "blue" as easily as she could refer to "God" or "justice" because she knew how all these words worked in the language.'[30] In this, Keller's practice is not radically different from that of those of us with the ability to perceive colour directly. Umberto Eco has drawn conclusions from the different ways in which the chromatic spectrum has been segmented across different cultures and historical periods:

> […] when one utters a colour term one is not directly pointing to a state of the world, but is rather connecting or correlating that term with a cultural unit, a concept due to a given segmentation of the chromatic continuum. The utterance of the term is determined, obviously, by a given sensation, but the transformation of the sensory stimuli into a precept is in some way determined by the semiotic relationship between the linguistic expression and the content culturally correlated to it.[31]

Our perception of the wavelengths of light that correspond to the vast range of shades constituting the overall category of blue (teal, sky, navy, aquamarine, midnight, air force, Prussian, steel, azure, cornflower, cerulean, sapphire, royal, periwinkle, turquoise, ultramarine) is culturally constituted. From childhood, we learn to assign names and boundaries to our colour perceptions by imitating those around us. Eco demonstrates that in another place or time we would draw the distinctions differently; some of these shades of 'blue' would be grouped into other colour categories. By moving away from the notion that sense perception is a pure, direct and unfiltered experience of the world, we begin to understand that our consciousness is built upon interpretations and is therefore as dependent

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primary means of communication would acquire this language with ready facility, whereas the modalities of speech and sign both present inherent obstacles.
[28] *The Story of My Life,* p. 26.
[29] Ibid, p. 52.
[30] Berger, p. xiv.
[31] Umberto Eco, 'A Conclusion on Perfect Language and Colours', in *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Phoenix, 2004), pp. 173–94 (p. 186).

upon language and communication as it is upon our senses. In the appendix to this thesis, I draw upon works by philosophers of mind and neuroscientists to establish that both the sensory impaired and those without such impairments are engaged in a constant process of interpretating the world around them through the mediation of language. I then propose that the most significant difference between the sensory impaired and the non-impaired lies not, as might first be supposed, in the quality or quantity of sense perceptions but in the subjective awareness of this process of continual reinterpretation. I describe how, over time and by force of repetition, a deafblind person may learn to be consciously aware of the mind's constant process of reassessment. This awareness is the result of a learned assimilation of the likelihood that current impressions contain errors and will need to change. Because it is not easy for fully sighted and hearing people (or perhaps even those with impairment to only one sense) to appreciate the magnitude of this, the interaction between the deafblind person and others is also affected, further influencing the deafblind person's interpretation of his or her context. The distortion to communication is interesting not only for what it tells us about such apparently exceptional cases but also for what it reveals about our cultural assumptions of 'normality'.[32]  Simi Linton has drawn attention to the 'marginalization of disabled people as objects of inquiry and the failure to see connections among disabled and nondisabled people's experience', stating that 'the relationship between disability and its "owner" has not been adequately studied'.[33] My appendix contributes to bridging this gap by exploring the subtle and complex web of effects resulting from these interactions between disabled and nondisabled people.

Having deconstructed fiction's automatic recourse to pervasive and self-reinforcing misconceptions about sensory loss in Chapter 1, I then turn in

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[32] An independent report commissioned by Sense, a UK charity representing deafblind people, shows that in 2010 approximately 132,000 people in the UK (equating to 212 people per 100,000 of the general population) have 'severe' impairments of both hearing and vision, and approximately 356,000 people in the UK (equating to 572 per 100,000) have 'significant' impairments to both senses. 'Estimating the Number of People with Co-Occurring Vision and Hearing Impairments in the UK', Robertson, Janet and Eric Emerson, *CeDR UK Sense Research Report 2010:1* (April 2010), Centre for Disability Research, Lancaster University <https://www.sense.org.uk/sites/default/files/CEDR_Research_Full_Report_PDF.pdf> [accessed 28 October 2015] (p. 1)

[33] Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 24.

Chapter 2 to identify narrative techniques that can better represent the effects of deafblindness. Here, I draw upon experiments with representing consciousness by Henry James in *What Maisie Knew* and by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*. In particular, I derive useful lessons from James's use of a subjective narrator who 'attends and amplifies' a 'different' consciousness; from Woolf's manipulation of sentence structure to represent overlapping thoughts; and from both writers' methods of forcing the reader to engage actively with the text.[34] In Chapter 3 I apply the findings of this research to my own writing and report on my practical engagement with representing deafblindness in fictional form. I then conclude with an extract from this creative work: a novel called *Kindness is a Language*.

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[34] Henry James, 'Preface to *What Maisie Knew'*, in *The Art of the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), pp. 140–48 (p. 146).

# Chapter 1. How has fiction dealt with sensory impairment?

## 1.1 Overview of chapter

Within this chapter, I aim to show that fiction treats sensory loss as a trope and thereby forces the reality of the impairment to bow to the thematic demands of the work. No study of this nature can be compartmentalised to literary use alone, and I examine the interplay between fictional representation and the wider sociopolitical context in order to unpick the means by which the incorporation of 'blind' and 'deaf' in everyday language serves both to reveal and to constitute lived attitudes towards sensory loss.

Sections 1.2 and 1.3 introduce two pioneering forays into the classification of deaf and blind characters in fiction, by Robert Panara and Kenneth Jernigan respectively. Undertaken in the 1970s when disability activism was gaining momentum, both classifications stem from personal experience: Panara being deaf and Jernigan, blind. Panara identifies six usages of deafness: melodramatic plot device; freaks, grotesques and distortions of reality; humanitarian acceptance; tormented isolation; blissful solitude; and as evidence of man's inhumanity to man. Jernigan finds nine figurations of blindness: compensatory or miraculous power; total tragedy; foolishness and helplessness; unrelieved wickedness and evil; perfect virtue; punishment for sin; abnormality or dehumanisation; purification; and symbol or parable. The unifying factor behind all fifteen categories is that deafness and blindness are employed as tropes for symbolic effect, thus warping the reality of the impairment. There are clear links between categories and a single fictional work often draws upon several tropes for reinforced symbolic effect. Although Panara is less polemical than Jernigan, both men's schemata find their focus in castigating the effects of such representations on the lives of deaf and blind people.

Having surveyed these categorisations, I then recontextualise their underlying political perspective in section 1.4. The development of the academic field of disability studies has exposed the ways in which fictional depictions of sensory loss both reflect and shape prevailing social attitudes. In section 1.4.1 I look at two influential theorisations: Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis' and Ato Quayson's 'aesthetic nervousness'. I apply these to Panara's and Jernigan's categorisations in order to derive insights into how these general principles apply to representations of sensory loss in particular.

Then in section 1.4.2 I dissect Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight* essays to clarify the interrelation of literary metaphor and social attitudes. Following de Man's own premise that a study of the literary language used by critics is the best starting point for the analysis of literary works themselves, I examine the workings of his 'blindness as insight' metaphor. Through this, I identify the mechanism by which such metaphors operate 'in reverse' and cause a sociocultural (mis)perception of what blindness is. I then propose, through an analogy with Keller's explanation of her own metaphorical understanding of literal concepts such as colour, that this reverse effect constitutes a collapse of the boundary between metaphoricity and literality. Metaphors involving sensory loss are widely used and understood as literal representations of the sensory loss itself. This is so embedded into both language and literature that it produces an invisibility effect which presents a barrier to adequate theorisation of the process.

In section 1.4.3 I examine Lennard Davis's concept of the 'deafened moment' as it applies to critic, reader and text. I use this as a means of teasing apart the effects of this metaphoric 'collapse' on representations of blindness and deafness as compared to one another. Based on an exposition of Derrida's deconstruction of phonocentrism and presence, Davis's theorisation interlinks blindness and deafness by contrasting their connections to historical methods of literary production. Applying this to Panara's and Jernigan's categories, I begin the process of setting these separate classifications into a contextual relationship.

Finally, in section 1.4.4 I use the political perspective thus far gained as a springboard to consider the semiotic iconicity of the 'collapsed' metaphors of 'blindness' and 'deafness'. Empirical research in the field of social cognition suggests that far from being merely a figurative embellishment, metaphor is an essential process by which we understand the world and form our social attitudes. Taking my lead from this, I propose a reconfigured method of classification: framing the categories by their determining social attitudes rather than by the resulting characterisations. This has the advantage of highlighting the political nature of representation instead of replicating a medicalising typology of 'defect'.

As a result, in section 1.5 I lay out an attitudinal model of classification, to which Panara's and Jernigan's categories are mapped. This produces a concatenated classification of four overarching social attitudes towards people with sensory losses: swamping personal meaning; objectifying by moral

judgment; denying agency and respect; and distorting into mirrored normality. Through an indicative literature review, I analyse a variety of texts within each of these new categories, some of which are drawn from Panara's and Jernigan's examples and others from a wider pool of literary sources. For this purpose, I have chosen examples for discussion: an exhaustive list is beyond the scope of this thesis. Finally, I suggest that through a mutually reinforcing web of effects, these four attitudinal categories produce an enveloping master category: the negation of the disabled self.

I then briefly consider autobiography in section 1.6 and assess how the absorption of these social attitudes has affected life writing as well as fiction. I contrast this with a contrarian strain of memoir that attempts to confront the actual physical and societal effects of sensory loss, and conclude that such works set useful precedents for renewed fictional endeavour. This leads, in section 1.7, to a discussion of a selected group of twentieth and twenty-first-century novels that, I contend, break the ingrained and destructive habit of using sensory loss as a symbol. Each of these works takes a more phenomenological approach to portraying deafness or blindness, which examines physical, psychological and sociocultural effects. I have organised these into three distinct approaches and I analyse and evaluate the specific literary techniques used within each. Section 1.7.1 considers the 'descriptive' approach through an evaluation of David Lodge's *Deaf Sentence* and Frances Itani's *Deafening.* Section 1.7.2 identifies the 'intuitive' approach via a comparison of the 'Proteus' and 'Lestrygonians' episodes within James Joyce's *Ulysses.* Finally, section 1.7.3 uncovers an 'oblique' approach within Henry Green's *Caught* and *Blindness.*

I conclude this chapter with a discussion in section 1.8 of the barriers that need to be overcome by future representations of sensory loss. I correlate work on sensory perception from neuroscientist Antonio Damasio with phenomenological observations in memoirs on blindness by Georgina Kleege and John Hull. From this, I determine that there are valid grounds for suggesting that future fictional representations of sensory loss need to engage with the ways in which consciousness may in fact differ for the deafblind. This prepares the way for the subsequent chapter's investigation into ways of representing such differences in fiction.

## 1.2 Panara's classification of deaf characters in drama and fiction

In the 1970s, as traditional ideas about disability began to be challenged, Robert Panara, an academic from Gallaudet, the groundbreaking American university for deaf students, declared that 'the deaf have been the victims of a great injustice by writers of fiction and drama.'[1] Tracing a historical progression in ways of representing deafness, he identifies six motifs, which I shall outline using his own examples.

### 1.2.1 The deaf as melodramatic plot devices for humour, mystery, or intrigue

Panara begins with two eighteenth-century picaresque novels; first itemising Defoe's portrayal of the titular 'deaf-mute' fortune teller in *Duncan Campbell* (1720). This roguish hero 'overcomes his handicap and proves to be an inspiration'.[2] Despite the verisimilitude of his description of the startling new methods of educating the deaf, Defoe makes Campbell's exploits 'too sensational and exaggerated to seem probable', including such astonishing adeptness at speech and lip reading that Campbell can completely disguise his deafness at will, enabling a variety of humorous and dramatic incidents.[3]

Forming a neat mirror image to Defoe's deaf man who pretends to be hearing, Smollett introduced the character of Cadwallader Crabtree, in *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), who feigns deafness to comic effect. Cadwallader tells Peregrine that he does so as an 'expedient' device: 'by which I not only avoid all disputes and their consequences, but also become master of a thousand little secrets, which are every day whispered in my presence without any suspicion of their being overheard'.[4]

Continuing the theme of the hearing masquerading as deaf, but in a more cloak-and-dagger manner, Panara adds two novels by Sir Walter Scott: *The*

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[1] Robert F. Panara, 'Deaf Characters in Fiction and Drama', *The Deaf American,* 24, 9 (1972), 3–8, p. 3.
[2] Panara, p. 3. Daniel Defoe, 'The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr Duncan Campbell', in *The Works of Daniel De Foe,* ed. by William Hazlitt, 3 vols (London: J. Clements, 1840–1843), II (1841). As further mentioned in section 1.4.1, there is some debate over whether this work is correctly attributed to Defoe.
[3] Panara, p. 3.
[4] Tobias Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle,* in *The Miscellaneous Works of Tobias Smollett,* ed. by Robert Anderson, 2nd edn, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Mundell, 1796–1800), II (1800), p. 408.

*Talisman* (1825), which shows the Prince Royal disguising himself as a Nubian 'deaf-mute' slave and spying for King Richard; and *Peveril of the Peak* (1831) in which a gypsy girl impersonates a deaf-mute in order to spy for the Roundheads.[5]

### 1.2.2 The deaf as freaks, grotesques and distortions of reality

Panara has one example in this category: *The Prince of India,* a novel published in 1893 by Lewis Wallace, the author of the popular *Ben Hur.* The mysterious Prince has six bodyguards, 'singular in that all of them were deaf and dumb'.[6] Two play important roles in the plot, performing superhuman feats ('a Greek demigod — so tall and strong and brave is he').[7] There is an overlap with Panara's first category in that the deaf bodyguards have been trained to 'understand thee by the motion of thy lips', which they do with impossible quickness and efficacy.[8]

### 1.2.3 The deaf accepted with humanitarian spirit and sentiment

Panara finds a sympathetic interest in deafness within Dickens's 'Doctor Marigold' and Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek,* and draws a parallel with the social advances taking place at the time in the education and welfare of the deaf. 'Doctor Marigold', published as one of Dickens's Christmas stories in 1900, shows a bluff, kindly circus 'barker' who adopts and educates a 'deaf and dumb' waif.[9] This waif develops a remarkable lip reading proficiency and grows into 'such a woman, so pretty, so intelligent, so expressive.'[10] Collins's *Hide and Seek,* published in 1861, unravels the mystery surrounding Mary, known as 'Madonna'; an illegitimate 'deaf and dumb' girl.[11] Collins created his sensitive, intelligent and beautiful heroine with the 'moral purpose' of supporting the

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[5] Sir Walter Scott, *The Talisman,* ed. by J. B. Ellis, J. H. Alexander, P. D. Garside and David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), and *Peveril of the Peak,* ed. by Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
[6] Lewis Wallace, *The Prince of India: Or Why Constantinople Fell* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1893), p. 20.
[7] Ibid, p. 83.
[8] Ibid, p. 23.
[9] Charles Dickens, 'Doctor Marigold', in *Christmas Stories from 'Household Words' and 'All The Year Round'* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1913), pp. 379–412, p. 392.
[10] Ibid, p. 397.
[11] Wilkie Collins, *Hide and Seek*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1854), I, p.129.

reader's 'faith in the better parts of human nature' by showing 'with what patience and cheerfulness the heavier bodily afflictions of humanity are borne'.[12] Pointing out that both Dickens and Collins pay careful, well-researched attention to the laborious manner in which their heroines must be taught to read and write, Panara links this to the print-orientated culture of the nineteenth century, which he believes 'could easily accommodate the deaf and communicate with them by means of pad and pencil'.[13]

### 1.2.4 The deaf tormented by isolation

Panara sees a twentieth-century shift from a culture of print and reading back to an oral-oriented culture that once again excludes the deaf because it is 'dominated by the telephone, the radio, talking pictures and television'.[14] Here, Panara describes Eugene O'Neill's 1916 play, *Warnings*, which centres on the tragic figure of James Knapp, a ship's wireless operator driven to hide the deterioration of his hearing in order to avoid destitution.[15] As a direct result of his inability to hear the messages being transmitted, his ship is wrecked. While crew and passengers take to the lifeboats, the distraught Knapp shoots himself. Panara finds a similar theme of loneliness, longing and isolation in Carson McCullers's 1940 novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter,* in which four disparate and disaffected characters find relief in unburdening themselves to John Singer, a 'deaf-mute' who 'listens' to them with great empathy but no precise understanding.[16] Singer, in turn, gains his own outlet by signing to his beloved deaf friend, Antonapoulos, who, the reader gathers, is quite unworthy of Singer's great love, being coarse, selfish and generally lacking in understanding. When Antonapoulos dies, Singer's isolation is complete and he shoots himself, leaving each of the other characters dealing with a loss that 'symbolizes the loneliness of the human heart and its perpetual yearning for love, and understanding, and self-expression'.[17]

Panara finds a further example of 'how deaf characters are made to symbolise the dilemma of modern man' in Ionesco's 1951 tragic farce *The*

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[12] Ibid, 'Note to Chapter VIII', pp. 296–97.
[13] Panara, p. 6.
[14] Ibid, p. 6.
[15] Eugene O'Neill, 'Warnings', in *Complete Plays,* 3 vols (New York: Library of America, 1988), I (1913–1920), pp. 75–94.
[16] Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (London: Penguin, 2000).
[17] Panara, p. 6.

*Chairs*.[18] Part of the movement towards the 'Theatre of the Absurd', the play shows an Old Man preparing to die by gathering invisible guests to hear the very important thing he has to say. He and his wife leap out of the window, leaving a hired Orator to deliver the Old Man's message. But the Orator 'indicates to the invisible crowd that he is deaf and dumb; he uses sign language; desperate efforts to make himself understood; then from his throat come moans and groans and the sort of guttural sounds made by deaf mutes.'[19] Even his attempt at chalk writing conveys nothing and he leaves, signifying, as Panara says, 'the utter futility of man's attempt to communicate meaningfully, and the uselessness of his existence'.[20]

### 1.2.5 Deafness as blissful solitude

Panara illustrates this category with two examples from J. D. Salinger's work. Holden Caulfield, the disaffected teenage narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), encapsulates his angst in a fantasy of pretending to be deaf so that everyone would 'get as bored as hell' with having to write down conversations: 'Everybody'd think I was just a poor deaf-mute bastard and they'd leave me alone.'[21] He imagines living in a cabin in the woods with a beautiful deaf girl in an illusion, as Panara glosses it, of 'solitude, innocence, truth and beauty'.[22] This idealised silence is given more space in Salinger's 1963 novella *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*.[23] Buddy, unexpectedly called upon to attend his brother's wedding, finds himself trapped, first in a taxi-cab and then in his own apartment, with a group of the bride's relations, all gossiping maliciously about his brother Seymour. Only the bride's 'deaf-mute' great-uncle refrains. Unaware of what is being said, contented and companionable, he becomes Buddy's confidant: 'wagging his head up and down and grinning'; and not trying to 'dispute'.[24] Again, Panara says, Salinger uses deafness 'to illustrate the ideal of silence and the blissful ignorance of those who are immune to the "sound and

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[18] Ibid, p. 6.
[19] Eugène Ionesco, 'The Chairs', in *Rhinoceros, The Chairs, The Lesson*, trans. by John Calder (London, Penguin, 2000), pp. 127–80, p. 176.
[20] Panara, p. 7.
[21] J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 178.
[22] Panara, p. 7.
[23] J. D. Salinger, 'Raise High the Roof-Beam, Carpenters', in *Raise High the Roof-Beam, Carpenters; Seymour an Introduction* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 2–59.
[24] Ibid, p. 53.

fury" of our modern temper,' although to anyone with experience of being deaf, this is, of course, 'merely wishful thinking'.[25]

### 1.2.6 Deafness as evidence of man's inhumanity to man

Panara presents just one book in his final category: Joanne Greenberg's *In This Sign* (1970): 'one of the few novels in which deaf characters play the major roles'.[26] A young couple, Abel and Janice, marry while attending a school for the deaf and are therefore forced to leave and enter the world of the Hearing. Naive and illiterate, they are cheated: Abel unwittingly signs a loan agreement and the result is a court-ordered wage garnishment that leaves the pair in abject poverty and squalor for the next twenty years, grinding out just enough of a living to pay the debt. Their hearing daughter Margaret, born into these grim circumstances, is required to act as their interpreter in the Hearing world. She suffers a loneliness and language retardation that mirrors theirs. Eventually she marries, leaving them even more cut off than before, and although they form a close, loving bond with her son Marshall, he finally leaves them too. Inspired, ironically, by the isolation of his grandparents' situation, he abandons them in order to join the Civil Rights movement and support a people whose voice has been metaphorically silenced.

### 1.2.7 Summing up Panara's classification

Acknowledging the interrelation of his last three categories ('tormented isolation', 'blissful solitude' and 'man's inhumanity to man'), Panara interprets this as a response to the twentieth-century human condition. He himself finds, along with the authors he describes, a 'striking similarity in the problems of the deaf and the dilemma of modern man'.[27] The identity Panara feels with this trope, together with his inability to condemn those 'heartening' nineteenth-century characterisations of the deaf that do not 'debase or ridicule', sidetrack him from his initial purpose: he fails to answer explicitly the question set up in his opening

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[25] Panara, p. 7.
[26] Ibid, p. 7. Joanne Greenberg, *In This Sign* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).
[27] Panara, p. 8.

paragraph: have fiction writers and dramatists done the deaf an injustice?[28] Nevertheless, speaking of his twentieth-century examples, he insists that:

> It is most significant that the great majority of these writers have depicted the deaf as symbols, not types. In other words, they have acutely sensed the deepening well of loneliness that exists in the soul of modern man, and his gradual withdrawal and alienation from society. By relating the eternal need of the deaf to express themselves and feel wanted by their fellow men, the modern writer will often use deaf characters to symbolize the large and universal problems of Everyman.[29]

While Panara thus hovered on the edge of the denunciation towards which his analysis led, Kenneth Jernigan, an influential figure in the sphere of rights for the blind, was conducting a parallel enquiry into the usages of blindness as a literary trope. As I shall now show, his findings were markedly similar, although his conclusions are far more polemical.

## 1.3 Jernigan's typology of blindness in literature

Two years after Panara's observations on deafness in fiction and drama, Kenneth Jernigan, a teacher, campaigner and leader of the National Federation for the Blind in the US, was composing a searing criticism of the usage of blindness in literature; declaring that it was analogous to — in fact was even a contributing factor towards — the social limitations created by well-meaning 'experts' who work with the blind:

> They tell us that blindness is not merely a loss to the eyes, but to the personality as well, that it is a death, a blow to the very being of the individual. They tell us that the eye is a sex symbol, and that the blind person cannot be a whole man or, for that matter, presumably a whole woman either. They tell us that we have multiple lacks and losses.[30]

Jernigan argues that literature is failing the blind by distorting and misrepresenting their experience in order to turn a physical condition into a trope. Like Panara he categorises these, coming up with nine headings as

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[28] Ibid, p. 5. To a twenty-first-century ear tuned into disability studies interrogations there is something very uncomfortable about gratitude from an experienced academic for such a meagre gift as a portrayal of deafness that does not ridicule. It is a salient reminder, should one be required, of the extent to which disability has been relegated to a lesser position.
[29] Panara, p. 5.
[30] Kenneth Jernigan, 'Blindness: Is Literature Against Us?', *President's Address, Banquet of the Annual Convention of the U.S. National Federation of the Blind, Chicago* (3 July 1974), p. 10. <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/convent/banque74.htm> [accessed 27 February 2016]

opposed to Panara's six. Again, I will summarise using the examples given in the original text.

### 1.3.1 Blindness as miracle or divine compensation

Jernigan points to the ancient roots of this trope in classical mythology: Homer, compensated with the gift of poetry, and Tiresias, given the gift of prophecy. Turning to more modern works, he cites Conan Doyle's *Sir Nigel* (1906), which contains a blind character whose 'senses […] that remain' have been divinely strengthened to the extent that he can 'hear the sap in the trees or the cheep of the mouse in its burrow'.[31] Similar astonishing capabilities, Jernigan notes, have been conferred upon the 'rash of blind detectives and investigators in popular fiction'.[32] In evidence, he refers to popular early twentieth-century creations, less well known now, such as Max Carrados, Damon Gaunt, Thornley Colton and Captain Duncan Maclain.[33] The trope has its place in romance also: Victor Hugo's idealised blind heroine Déa in *The Man Who Laughs,* carried away by the sound of her lover's voice, is 'absorbed by that kind of ecstasy peculiar to the blind, which seems at times to give them a song to listen to in their souls and to make up to them for the light which they lack by some strain of ideal music'.[34] Such 'mumbo jumbo', Jernigan contends, does 'a profound disservice to the blind', not only by strengthening the stereotype of the blind person as alien or different, but also by suggesting that a blind person's achievements are due to some inherent form of magic.[35]

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[31] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sir Nigel: A Novel of the Hundred Years' War* (New York: Dover, 2009), p. 264.

[32] Jernigan, p. 3.

[33] These four blind detectives appeared in popular novels and short stories. Max Carrados features in four novels and several short stories by Ernest Bramah: *Max Carrados* (London: Methuen, 1914); *The Eyes of Max Carrados* (London: Grant Richards, 1923); *Max Carrados Mysteries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927); *The Bravo of London* (London: Cassell, 1934). Damon Gaunt features in *At One-Thirty: A Mystery* by Isabel Ostrander (New York: Watt, 1915). Thornley Colton appears in a series of short stories, and a novel by Clinton H. Stagg: *Silver Sandals* (New York: Watt, 1916). Captain Duncan Maclain is the hero of twelve novels and several short stories by Baynard Kendrick, beginning with *The Last Express* (New York, Morrow, 1937) and ending with *Frankincense and Murder* (New York: Morrow, 1961).

[34] Victor Hugo, *The Man Who Laughs*, trans. by [?], 2 vols (Boston: Little, Brown, 1888), II, p. 89.

[35] Jernigan, p. 3.

### 1.3.2 Blindness as total tragedy

Returning to classical roots, Jernigan instances the Chorus's reproach to Oedipus: 'Better to die than be alive and blind'.[36] In similar vein, he cites Milton's blinded Samson: 'Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half [...] My self, my Sepulcher, a moving Grave'.[37] Jernigan is severe upon Milton 'whose greatest writing (including "Paradise Lost") was done after his blindness', for reinforcing this stereotype 'in spite of his own personal experience to the contrary'.[38] Blindness is again a fate worse than death in Schiller's play *William Tell*: when an old man is blinded and forced to become a beggar, his son exclaims 'To die is — nothing — nothing! / But to live, and not to see — is misery indeed!'[39]

This sentiment echoes through Kipling's novel *The Light that Failed*: the blinded hero, Dick Heldar, is 'dead in the death of the blind' and finally receives the 'crowning mercy of a kindly bullet through his head'.[40] Similarly, Conrad's Captain Whalley in 'The End of the Tether' is mercifully drowned and thus, it is implied, saved from the worse fate of sightlessness: 'The light had finished ebbing out of the world; not a glimmer. It was a dark waste.'[41]

Moving into the twentieth century, Jernigan notes two fictional casualties of war whose blinding is made an evocation of the century's wasteful destruction: Maurice in D. H. Lawrence's 'The Blind Man' (1922) falls into 'a black misery, when his life was a torture to him';[42] and Timmy in Rosamund Lehmann's *Invitation to the Waltz* (1932) leads 'a counterfeit of life bred from his murdered youth'.[43] Somewhat acidly, Jernigan concludes that for writers 'the tragedy of blindness is so unbearable that only two solutions can be imagined: either the victim must be cured or he must be killed'.[44]

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[36] Sophocles. 'Oedipus the King', in *The Three Theban Plays* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1984), pp. 135–252, p. 230, 1367–68.

[37] John Milton, 'Samson Agonistes', in *John Milton: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 671–716, pp 674–75 (79–102).

[38] Jernigan, pp. 4–5.

[39] Frederick Schiller. *William Tell*, trans. by Samuel Robinson (London: Hurst Robinson, 1825), I. IV.

[40] Rudyard Kipling, *The Light that Failed,* 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1915), II, pp. 56, 166.

[41] Joseph Conrad, 'The End of the Tether'*, in Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories* (London: Blackwood, 1902), pp. 183–375, p. 368.

[42] D. H. Lawrence, 'The Blind Man', in *England, My England, And Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1996)*,* pp 71–100, p. 72.

[43] Rosamond Lehmann, *Invitation to the Waltz* (London: Virago, 2006), p. 286.

[44] Jernigan, pp. 5–6.

### 1.3.3 Blindness as foolishness or helplessness

Jernigan finds biblical roots for this category: in the Old Testament, blind Isaac is duped by his younger son. Wearing a goatskin in imitation of his hairy older brother, Jacob gains his father's favour by substituting kid meat for Isaac's preferred venison.[45] As Jernigan complains; to be fooled by such measures the old man 'must have taken leave of the rest of his senses as well as his sense of sight'.[46] Claiming that in the Middle Ages blind beggars were rounded up on festive days to don donkey ears and gibber for general amusement, Jernigan finds similar 'hilarity' in 'The Merchant's Tale' where Chaucer presents a young wife copulating with her lover in a tree while her blind old husband stands oblivious beneath. When the old man miraculously regains his sight and catches them, the quick-witted wife prevails by insisting that her intention was indeed to shock him into a cure.[47] Shakespeare, says Jernigan, is 'just as bad': showing the blinded Gloucester in *King Lear* to be 'so thoroughly confused and helpless that he can be persuaded of anything'.[48] Similarly, in the sixteenth-century play *Eulenspiegel und die Blinden* by Hans Sachs, some blind beggars are fooled by the trickster hero into believing that one of their number has been given money and thereby run up a bill at a nearby inn; earning themselves a night's imprisonment in a pigsty when it turns out they cannot pay.[49] Meanwhile, in Maurice Maeterlinck's play 'The Blind' (1890), the sightless characters lost in the forest are helpless to such a degree that they are too afraid even to draw closer to one another, and become terrified by simple events, such as snow falling, or a dog passing.[50] Jernigan describes the action as 'a ridiculous tableau of groping, groaning, and grasping at the air'.[51] He is equally scornful of Gertrude, Gide's innocent young heroine in *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1919), whose blindness makes her inexplicably unaware of sin and causes her to be duped by the

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[45] Genesis 27.
[46] Jernigan, p. 6.
[47] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue', in 'The Canterbury Tales*', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry Dean Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp 153–68.
[48] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, (London: Penguin, 2015).
[49] Paul Oppenheimer, ed. and trans., 'How Eulenspiegel Gave Twelve Blind Men Twelve Guilders', in *Till Eulenspiegel: His Adventures* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp 146–49.
[50] Maurice Maeterlinck, 'The Blind', in *The Intruder; The Blind; The Seven Princesses; The Death of Tintagiles,* trans. by Richard Hovey (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1914), pp. 57–116.
[51] Jernigan, p 7.

sinfully tempted pastor who claims to protect her.[52] Jernigan approvingly repeats an unnamed blind reviewer's tart comment that Gertrude shows 'all the signs of an outright idiot'.[53]

### 1.3.4 Blindness as unrelieved wickedness and evil

When the young hero of Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) meets the old beggar-pirate Blind Pew, he believes that he 'never saw a more dreadful figure' than this 'horrible, soft-spoken, eyeless creature'; and 'never heard a voice so cruel, and cold, and ugly as that blind man's'.[54] Jernigan finds a similar horrified shrinking from the evil associated with blindness in the sixteenth-century picaresque romance *Lazarillo de Tormes,* in which a young boy is apprenticed to a cruel and wicked old blind man.[55] Jernigan identifies an element of expediency in such representations: 'Given the casual cruelty with which the blind have generally been treated, such villainous caricatures have also provided a convenient excuse and justification. After all, if the blind are rascals and rapscallions, they should be handled accordingly — and no pity wasted.'[56]

### 1.3.5 Blindness as perfect virtue

The opposite side of the 'counterfeit coin' that displays blindness as evil is blindness as 'angels and halos'.[57] The heroine of Laura Richards' novel *Melody* is just such a miraculous paragon. She rescues a baby from a burning building, cures the sick with singing and reforms alcoholics by her own perfect example. The novel fulsomely lists her abilities:

> The blind child touched life with her hand, and knew it. Every leaf was her acquaintance, every flower her friend […] some subtle sense for which we have no name gave her the power of reading with a touch the mood and humor of those she was with […]. Another power she had, that of attracting to her "all creatures living beneath the sun, that creep or swim or fly or run." Not a cat or dog in the village but would leave his own

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[52] André Gide, 'La Symphonie Pastorale', in *Two Symphonies*, trans. by Dorothy Bussy (New York: Knopf, 1931).

[53] Jernigan. p. 7.

[54] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, ed. by Clayton Hamilton (New York: Longmans, Green, 1910), pp. 21–22.

[55] Anon., 'The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and his Fortunes and Misfortunes', in *Lazarillo de Tormes and the Swindler: Two Spanish Picaresque Novels*, ed. and trans. by Michael Alpert (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 1–60.

[56] Jernigan. p. 7.

[57] Ibid, p. 8.

master or mistress at a single call from Melody. She could imitate every bird-call with her wonderful voice.[58]

Jernigan is particularly frustrated by this idealised characterisation since, as the daughter of a pioneer in education for the blind, Richards should have known better. Like Milton before her, Richards has been, he says, 'betrayed by the forces of tradition and custom, of folklore and literature'.[59]

Rivalling Melody in sweetness and virtue is another nineteenth-century creation: the eponymous heroine of John G. Morris's *The Blind Girl of Wittenberg* (1856). Instead of slapping the young man who suggests to her that God removed her sight so that her heart 'might be illuminated with more brilliant light', she returns an even more cloying reply: 'Do you not think, sir, that we blind people have a world within us which is perhaps more beautiful than yours, and that we have a light within us which shines more brilliantly than your sun?'[60] Other examples abound: Jernigan presents Bertha, the sweet and noble blind heroine of Dickens's *The Cricket on the Hearth* (who, in Jernigan's opinion, 'comes off almost as an imbecile'),[61] and the self-sacrificing Nydia in Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii.*[62] For Jernigan, both this trope of perfect virtue and the previous one of unrelieved wickedness present blindness 'as a transforming event, entirely removing the victim from the ordinary dimensions of life and humanity'.[63]

### 1.3.6 Blindness as punishment for sin

Jernigan describes this as one of the 'oldest and cruellest' themes but deals with it briefly: 'Oedipus was blinded as a punishment for incest, and, Shakespeare's Gloucester, for adultery.'[64]

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[58] Laura E. Richards, *Melody* (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1894), pp. 47–48.
[59] Jernigan, p. 8.
[60] John G. Morris, *The Blind Girl of Wittenberg: a Life Picture of the Times of Luther and the Reformation,* trans. by [?] (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1856), pp. 37–38.
[61] Jernigan, p. 8.
[62] Charles Dickens, 'The Cricket on the Hearth' in *The Christmas Books*, 2 vols (London: Penguin, 2001); Edward Bulwer-Lytton*, The Last Days of Pompeii* (London: Blackwood, 1860).
[63] Jernigan, p. 8.
[64] Ibid, p. 9.

### 1.3.7 Blindness as purification

Back-to-back with punishment stands the theme of redemption. Jernigan tersely identifies 'the stereotype of blindness as a kind of purification rite — an act which wipes the slate clean and transforms human character into purity and goodness'.[65] He names *Westward Ho!* as an example: Charles Kingsley's mock-Elizabethan sea adventure of cruelty and punishment. Blinded at sea by a stroke of lightning, the vengeful hero Amyas Leigh is thereby 'instantly converted from a crook to a saint.'[66]

### 1.3.8 Blindness as abnormality or dehumanisation

Running through all of the previous devices is the 'ugly stain' of blindness as dehumanisation: 'a kind of banishment from the world of normal life and relationships'.[67] Thus, Jernigan notes that both Dickens's blind Bertha and Bulwer-Lytton's blind Nydia fall in love without any sense, in their own minds or in the reader's, that this could ever be requited. In similar fashion, Kipling's story 'They' (1904) assumes that its heroine's blindness must bar her from marriage and motherhood, but in compensation (thus recalling Jernigan's first category), kindly Miss Florence feels herself surrounded by the ghosts of dead children.[68] Jernigan comments: 'We are not meant to infer that she is as crazy as a hoot owl — only that she is blind, and therefore entitled to her spooky fantasies.'[69]

### 1.3.9 Blindness as symbol or parable

All of Jernigan's categorisations are symbolic in nature: his overriding point is that none of these characterisations of blindness (as miraculous, tragic, evil, virtuous, punishment, redemption or banishment) is an innate part of the physical condition. Yet, through constant association, the symbolic nature of these depictions is all but invisible. In this category of 'symbol or parable', Jernigan places those portrayals of blindness that use blindness in an extended allegorical manner, often with the intention of satirising aspects of 'normal' experience. These may include blindness as a form of death, as damnation, or as a symbol of non-literal kinds of 'unseeing'. Jernigan refers again to

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[65] Ibid, p. 9.
[66] Ibid, p. 9.
[67] Ibid, p. 9.
[68] Rudyard Kipling, 'They' (London: Penguin, 2011).
[69] Jernigan, p. 9.

Maeterlinck's play *The Blind*, which uses its fumbling, groping blind characters to remind us all of our essential helplessness. H.G. Wells's 'The Country of the Blind' has a similar theme, which begins when the sighted climber Nunez falls into a deep canyon where a race of eyeless people has evolved over hundreds of years.[70] Assuming that his sight will give him natural authority, Nunez is shocked to find it near-useless. The inhabitants work at night and sleep in the day; he lacks their ability to navigate using touch and sound, and is far less able than they in these purpose-built surroundings. Although the capability of this blind 'race' may appear a welcome change from the usual narrative of helplessness, this is not the point of the story. The mood becomes increasingly dark as the blind people confront Nunez's attempts to convince them that he has this (to them) extra-sensory power of 'vision'. They conclude that his eyes, which they consider horrible, diseased things, are the cause of these mad ravings, and therefore determine that they must be removed. The chilling nature of the impossible situation in which Nunez finds himself, bafflingly unable to get his message across, is a symbol of the lack of communication and frustration in the modern world.

Jernigan also refers to a science fiction retelling of Wells's story: Paul Corey's *The Planet of the Blind*.[71] Dr Thur Stone is marooned on a far-off planet whose population, the Grendans, have evolved into unsighted humanoids with a technology superior to that on Earth. Like Wells's blind 'race', the Grendans are repelled by the discovery of Stone's eyes; in fact, they associate them with animal-like primitivism. Dr Stone's initial assumption that his sight will make him superior is dashed when he is proved to lack other sensory capabilities that they take for granted. On this planet of the literally blind, he is forced to recognise his own metaphorical blindness: too caught up in his own self-worth, he has undervalued others. In particular he has mistreated his daughter by allowing her lover to be banished to a menial job far away as a result of a rigid capability-testing system. Now that he himself has been relegated to animal status by an equally inflexible testing regime, he has ample opportunity to reflect on his error.

Jernigan finds another parable in Conrad Aiken's short story 'Silent Snow, Secret Snow', which uses blindness as a metaphor for schizophrenia. Twelve-year-old Paul withdraws from his family into an imaginary 'mist of

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[70] H.G. Wells, 'The Country of the Blind', in *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: Nelson, 1911), pp. 536–68.
[71] Paul Corey, *Planet of the Blind* (New York: Paperback Library, 1969).

snow'.[72] The mist thickens, 'deeper and deeper and silenter and silenter', until Paul rejects his parents and doctor, and retreats to his bedroom where 'the darkness was coming in long white waves'.[73] The external world is finally extinguished as the snow tells him: 'Shut your eyes, now — you will no longer see much — in this white darkness who could see, or want to see?'[74] As Jernigan concludes; in such parable-type treatments 'there is an implied acceptance of blindness as a state of ignorance and confusion, of the inversion of normal perceptions and values, and of a condition equal to if not worse than death'.[75]

## 1.4 The political perspective: theory as a call to action

Panara and Jernigan were both activists: driven not only to chronicle prejudiced attitudes towards deaf and blind people in literature, but also to revolutionise their standing and opportunities in life.[76] Their accounts are thus written from a political perspective, upon which I now wish to enlarge. Ato Quayson makes a distinction between the 'literary model of disability' and the 'reality' of disabled experience when he calls for an engagement with disability that goes further than mere observation:

> The epistemological effect of representation is quite different from the emotional effects of misunderstanding and stereotyping in the real world. Thus the first may be used to illuminate aspects of the second but not be taken to have exhausted or replaced it. Our commitment must ultimately be to changing the world and not merely to reading and commenting on it.[77]

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[72] Conrad Aiken, 'Silent Snow, Secret Snow', in *The Short Stories of Conrad Aiken* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), pp. 216–35*, p. 226.
[73] Ibid, pp. 239, 234.
[74] Ibid, p. 234.
[75] Jernigan*. p. 9.
[76] Robert Panara (1921–1987), deafened by meningitis aged 10, went on to set up both the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and the National Theatre of the Deaf in the US. Kenneth Jernigan (1926–1998), blind from birth, transformed services for the blind through his directorship of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, and for two decades served as president of the US National Federation for the Blind. Harry Lang, *Teaching from the Heart and Soul: The Robert F. Panara Story* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2007); Jim H. Omvig, *The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2005).
[77] Ato Quayson, *Disability and the Crisis of Representation: Aesthetic Nervousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 30.

Quayson's call to action is invigorating. However, his separation between literature and the real world is potentially misleading. I argue that activism is not a separate endeavour from the interpretation of disability within literature (to which Quayson has materially contributed, as will be shown) and that these 'epistemological' and 'emotional' effects are not as distinct as may first appear. Figuring sensory loss in the ways that Panara and Jernigan have identified is not a separate issue to the 'misunderstanding and stereotyping' that takes part in the real world. Quayson approaches the crux of the matter when he points out that 'Literature does not merely reflect any already socially interpreted reality, but adds another tier of interpretation that is comprehensible within the terms set by the literary-aesthetic domain.'[78]

Taking this further, I suggest that another layer of interpretation is added by the refraction of that literary output back into the sociocultural sphere. The metaphor is read in reverse: the metaphorical associations within the 'literary-aesthetic domain' have been subsumed into fixed characteristics of the impairment itself. The sheer number of symbolised representations overwhelmingly influences nondisabled people's perception of disability. Mitchell and Snyder claim that 'Americans learn perspectives on disability from books and films more than from policies or personal interactions'.[79] Thus, ablebodied people's behaviour, decisions and actions in relation to disabled people are determined by attitudes predicated on fictive representation. This affects disabled people's lives in countless ways. More subtly still, the tide of coded portrayals makes it difficult, impossible even, for people with disabilities to imagine themselves out of these essentialised constructions. As previously highlighted, some of the writers critiqued by Panara and Jernigan had privileged knowledge of the world of sensory loss, yet repeated the same prejudiced and prejudicing tropes: Jernigan describes them as 'betrayed by the forces of literature and tradition'.[80] It is through this means of dissemination that cultural attitudes towards sensory impairment have become so entrenched that they warp not only the way in which other people view the deaf and blind, but also affect how those of us with such impairments view ourselves. The depiction of disability is itself disabling. To shake off this false ontology, we must challenge its epistemology. Achieving a fuller interrogation of literature's role in how we

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[78] Ibid, p. 14.
[79] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis,* p. 166.
[80] Jernigan, p. 5.

'know' blindness and deafness is an indispensable step towards a better understanding of what it means to have sensory losses. Further, it is a necessary stage for an ultimate aim of distinguishing what elements of that experience are integral, and what others are constituted by the sociocultural context. Until then, there will always be resistance: to change the world, one must first demonstrate that it is the world and not oneself that needs to change.

### 1.4.1 Training the disability studies lens: bringing Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis' and Quayson's 'aesthetic nervousness' into focus

As Panara's and Jernigan's examples show, images of sensory loss range across all styles and genres of literature. David Mitchell, finding the same proliferation, points out that this is not the usual state of affairs for a politically oppressed class: 'While racial, sexual, and ethnic criticisms have often founded their critiques on the pervasive absence of their experiences in the dominant culture's literature, images of disability abound.'[81] Given the teeming pool of material, it is curious that, as Simi Linton highlighted in 1998: 'Literary criticism has not done a very good job of challenging the dominant disability narratives. […] Where is the critique of the aching narrative of the blind man […] ?'[82] Linton's call has since been answered by a growing number of critics and I shall come on to discuss in particular the theorisations of Davis, Mitchell and Snyder, and Quayson. However, as I hope to show, an imbalance persists: in contrast to the enlightening deconstruction of the ways in which political forces have shaped literary portrayals of gender, race and sexuality, those influencing depictions of disability remain, to a significant degree, uninterrogated.

Mitchell and Snyder provide a potential explanation for this contradictory state of affairs when they aver that abundance of representation can still produce absence because disability is screened out of our imagination as we consume the narrative. They contend that, until we examine texts through a disability studies lens, the disabilities bestowed upon their characters are strangely invisible to even the sophisticated reader:

> During a recent conference of the Herman Melville Society in Völös, Greece, we met a scholar from Japan interested in representations of disability in American literature. When asked if Japanese literature made use of disabled characters to the same extent as American and European literatures, he honestly replied that he had never encountered

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[81] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 52.
[82] Linton, *Claiming Disability*, p. 114.

any. Upon further reflection, he listed several and laughingly added that of course the Nobel Prize winner Kenzaburo Oë wrote almost exclusively about the subject.[83]

Because disability is used symbolically, it is not the impairment itself that makes an impression on the reader's mind, but the quality that it is employed to represent. Mitchell and Snyder point to a lack of theorisation as the reason why even 'knowledgeable scholars' fall prey to this: 'Without developed models for analysing the purpose and function of representational strategies of disability, readers tend to filter a multitude of disability figures absently through their imaginations.'[84]

This undertheorisation of disability in literature is subtended by an inadequate deconstruction of disability in life. In the 1990s, Lennard Davis warned that 'the general population does not understand the political connection between disability and the status quo the way many people now understand the connection between race and gender and contemporary structures of power'.[85] Two decades later, an adequate theoretical underpinning for this task is still far from realised. In 2005, Michel Bérubé noted with surprise how often he, an experienced academic within the field of disability studies, failed to register the presence of disability in narratives.[86] Like the Japanese critic described by Mitchell and Snyder, he discovered disability abounding unnoticed in texts he knew well. Such invisibility, Bérubé suggests, exposes the need 'to demonstrate that many of the narrative devices and rhetorical tropes we take for granted are grounded in the underrecognized and undertheorized facts of bodily difference'.[87] If literary critics stall while sociologists remedy this, it may prove a long wait. In 2012, sociologist Carol Thomas urgently argued the case for:

> a distinct sociology of disability to come into being as a new sub-discipline within mainstream sociology […] located alongside the now familiar engagements with gender, 'race', sexuality, age and social class. […] In this case, disability would cease to be located almost exclusively in a specialized sub-field of interpretative medical sociology […]. Rather, disability — like gender — would become a key dimension of global social divisions and inequity that can be approached from a multiplicity of

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[83] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 51.
[84] Ibid, p. 51.
[85] Lennard J. Davis, 'Deafness and Insight: The Deafened Moment as a Critical Modality', *College English*, 57, 8 (Dec 1995), 881–900, p. 883.
[86] Michael Bérubé, 'Disability and Narrative', *PMLA*, 120, 2 (Mar. 2005), 568–76, p. 568.
[87] Ibid, p. 570.

analytical directions, using a rich mix of theoretical perspectives, methodologies and research techniques.[88]

That such a case still has to be made, that the need is not self-evident, shows the difficulty of attempting to change the situation. Theorisations of disability in life and literature must go hand-in-hand: a political perspective should interrogate the relationship between the two. Disentangling the nexus of symbolism cannot be undertaken as a purely literary endeavour.

One factor contributing to the paucity of models is a deliberate redirection of the attention of scholars. As a field of academic enquiry, disability studies grew out of political activism, responding to what Mitchell and Snyder have called 'the cultural slander heaped upon bodily difference'.[89] The need to combat the 'medicalisation' of disability which focused on 'defective anatomy' as a reason for restriction, subjugation and exclusion of disabled people made the actual experience of disability (in any sense except that of oppression) a subject to be avoided: 'Since disabled bodies had endured such a history of debilitating classifications, disability studies purposely refrained from formulating the embodied experiences of disabled people.'[90] Instead, scrutiny was applied to 'political critiques of discrimination and architectural exclusion'.[91] When literary portrayals of disability were studied, it was to show that disabled people were excluded from genuine representation there, just as they were shut out from free and full cultural inclusion in life. Mitchell and Snyder expound:

> Nearly every culture views disability as a problem in need of a solution, and this belief establishes one of the major modes of historical address directed towards people with disabilities. The necessity for developing various kinds of cultural accommodations to handle the 'problem' of corporeal difference (through charitable organizations, modifications of physical architecture, welfare doles, quarantine, genocide, euthanasia programs etc.) situates people with disabilities in a profoundly ambivalent relationship to the cultures and stories they inhabit.[92]

'Stories' as well as 'cultures' are included in this relationship of ambivalence because, as disability studies scholars found, narrative portrayals of disability

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[88] Carol Thomas, 'Theorising Disability and Chronic Illness: Where Next for Perspectives in Medical Sociology?', *Social Theory & Health*, 10, 3 (2012), 209–28, p. 209.
[89] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, 'Re-engaging the Body: Disability Studies and the Resistance to Embodiment', *Public Culture*, 13, 3 (Fall 2001), 367–89, p. 367.
[90] Ibid, pp. 370, 374.
[91] Ibid, p. 374.
[92] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 47.

ignore the underlying sociopolitical constructions: 'while stories rely upon the potency of disability as a symbolic figure, they rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions'.[93] Thus, early analyses of this 'symbolic figure', including both Panara's and Jernigan's, took place within this activist framework and came from a deep sense of injustice. They focused on identifying and classifying the stereotypes, marking each as yet another way in which disabled experience was hemmed in, stifled and restricted from view.

From this starting point, as Mitchell and Snyder chronicle: 'disability studies outgrew its denunciations of stereotypes' and moved on to argue that disability represented 'a deep-seated, yet uninterrogated, cultural conflict'.[94] Exploring this 'potent symbolic site of literary investment' has opened up opportunities for a more nuanced understanding of literary figurations of disability.[95] I will examine two responses to this and specifically relate their findings to the representation of sensory loss: first Mitchell and Snyder's concept of 'narrative prosthesis' and then Quayson's 'aesthetic nervousness'.

Mitchell and Snyder posit a 'two-fold' function for disabled people in literary discourse: 'disability pervades literary narrative, first as a stock feature of characterisation and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device'; each is a 'discursive dependency' that relies on a 'narrative prosthesis'.[96] The concept requires us to recognise disability as a 'crutch' on which narratives 'lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight'.[97]

Looking first at the 'stock characterisation' element of this two-fold function, we can find an example in the 'rash' of blind detectives identified by Jernigan in section 1.3.1. LeRoy Panek has traced the origins of these blind detectives back to an attempt to emulate the intellectually rarified figure of Sherlock Holmes:

> Doyle, following the example of Poe, insisted the detective was not quite an ordinary mortal. […] Turn of the century writers shared Doyle's impulse to differentiate the detective from ordinary people, but they also wanted to find an extraordinary character who was not Holmes and whose eccentricities arose from different sources. This led to the creation of women detectives, boy detectives, old detectives, blind detectives, […] and a selection of other eccentric types. In many ways however, this was

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[93] Ibid, p. 48.
[94] Mitchell and Snyder, 'Re-engaging the Body', p. 377.
[95] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 49.
[96] Ibid, p. 47.
[97] Ibid, p. 49.

> simply disguising, for turn of the century detectives mostly do the same sort of things […] — they think.[98]

Blindness here, like femaleness and extreme youth or age, is just another 'eccentricity' that marks out one 'thinking' detective from another. As a one-dimensional attribution of an impairment to a character merely to add interest or make them stand out, it clearly fits Mitchell and Snyder's delineation of disability as stock characterisation: 'Disability lends a distinctive idiosyncrasy to any character that differentiates the character from the anonymous background of "the norm."'[99] The shallowness of such characterisation is apparent from the way that blindness is rarely, if ever, shown to be an obstacle for these detectives in their pursuit of truth and justice. Rather, it actively aids their deductive abilities through the compensatory sharpening of other senses. T. J. Binyon has described how 'preternaturally acute' the blind detective Carrados's other senses are. Though he cannot see a photograph:

> he can get a likeness from its negative by running his fingers over the surface of the film, just as he can read letters by feeling the traces left by pen or pencil, shoot by aiming at the sound of a beating heart, and detect a false moustache from its 'five yard aura of spirit gum'.[100]

Such astonishing capabilities are clearly unlikely, to say the least. Yet, as Binyon notes, Bramah wrote an introduction to a later set of Carrados stories in response to exactly this criticism; claiming that all these capabilities were founded in real-life incidents and offering as proof several anecdotes of people overcoming the difficulties of blindness or deafness.[101] These examples are a curious mixture of the largely banal interspersed with the frankly unbelievable: a blind man who 'made his own bed, cooked his own victuals […] and was allowed by all to keep as clean a house as the most particular spinster' together with a blind lady 'who wrote a letter' are presented alongside a deaf girl who 'can hear perfectly over the telephone by placing her finger-tips upon the receiver'.[102] The conclusion to be drawn is that blind and deaf people have generally been believed to be so entirely incapable that it is as likely that one could shoot a man

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[98] LeRoy Panek, *An Introduction to the Detective Story* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University, 1987), p. 99.

[99] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 47.

[100] T. J. Binyon, *Murder Will Out: The Detective in Fiction from Poe to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), repr. (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), p. 15.

[101] Ernest Bramah, 'Author's Introduction', in *The Eyes of Max Carrados* repr. (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2013), pp. 191–202.

[102] Bramah, 'Author's Introduction', pp. 193, 198, 198.

dead, guided only by the vibration of his beating heart, as straighten sheets on a bed. Pairing blindness with heightened powers of detection may well have seemed apt to these authors, since it draws upon the long-held association between blindness and insight that so exasperated Jernigan, as discussed in section 1.3.1. Jernigan makes clear the way in which such endowments imply 'that whatever a blind person may accomplish is not due to his own ability but to some magic inherent in blindness itself'.[103] Thus, as Bramah's choice of anecdotes suggests; far from augmenting public respect for the everyday capabilities of actual blind people, the extraordinary abilities of these blind detectives tend rather to diminish it.

Mitchell and Snyder's 'opportunistic metaphoric device', the second element in their two-fold model of 'discursive dependencies', can also be readily identified within Panara's and Jernigan's categories. Examples include the use of a 'deaf-mute' to connote isolation, or inflicting sudden blindness to signify either punishment or purifying redemption. As shown in section 1.2.5, Panara held up *The Catcher in the Rye* as an example of deafness figured as blissful solitude; Mitchell and Snyder also reference Salinger's 'fantasised commune of deaf-mutes' as one example within an 'artistically varied and culturally distinct' set of works in which disability 'recurs' as a 'potent force that challenges cultural ideals of the "normal" or "whole" body'.[104] This apparent positivity conceals an inherent conflict: 'At the same time, disability also operates as the textual obstacle that causes the literary operation of open-endedness to close down or stumble.'[105] Thus, when angst-ridden teenager Holden Caulfield imagines escaping to live as a 'deaf mute', his fantasy provides a powerful counterpoint to the prevailing culture's 'normalizing Truths'.[106] The imagined 'deaf-mute' lifestyle is one of natural innocence set against the 'phoniness' and consumerism of New York. Yet, concealed behind this apparently liberating disruption of normalised values lies a different constriction: 'the artifice of disability binds characters to a

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[103] Jernigan, p. 3.
[104] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 50. Other works cited include Shakespeare's *Richard III,* Montaigne's 'Of Cripples', Melville's *Moby Dick*, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathusta,* Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Next,* Dunn's *Geek Love*, Powers's *Operation Wandering Soul*, and Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter.*
[105] Ibid, p. 50.
[106] Ibid, p. 50.

programmatic (even deterministic) identity'.[107] While the disability symbolises alternative possibilities, the disabled characters are 'indentured to their biological programming'; forced to live out the symbol that they represent.[108] Holden's 'deaf-mutes' have no individuality: they can exist only in idealised opposition to a consumerist culture.

The limitations are clearer still in Salinger's later novella *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, also cited by Panara. Although the bride's father's 'deaf-mute' uncle occupies much more textual space than Holden's imagined deaf community, the role offered to him is equally constrained. When Buddy unburdens himself of a childhood experience, distorting the facts to make his brother's behaviour more acceptable, he half expects to be called a liar but the uncomprehending deaf man does not 'dispute' with him: 'The contrary. He grinned at me encouragingly, as though anything further I had to say on the subject could go down only as the absolute truth with him.'[109] Despite knowing that the uncle has heard nothing, Buddy finds this illusion of acceptance deeply comforting. At the novella's end, he wishes that he could send the deaf man's cigar-end to his brother as a wedding gift: 'Just the cigar, in a small, nice box. Possibly with a blank sheet of paper enclosed, by way of explanation.'[110] The blank paper represents both the impossibility of explanation and the simplicity of acceptance: qualities also symbolised in the silent, blank persona of the uncle himself. Buddy wants to share the spiritual release he has found; one that can only be facilitated by the incurious, meaningless receptiveness of the 'deaf-mute'.

In this, Salinger's 1963 novella compares with William Trevor's 1969 novel *Mrs Eckdorf in O'Neill's Hotel*, which also features a deaf character whose purpose is to provide a non-judgmental outlet for the protagonists; an acceptance without engagement.[111] Again, the deaf character is an elderly, detached figure. Ninety-one-year-old Mrs Sinnott resides at the top of the hotel she owns, graciously receiving the other characters and requiring them to inscribe their conversations with her into blank notebooks. Strangely, they find that they write the truth; whereas in their spoken conversations with each other

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[107] Ibid, p. 50.
[108] Ibid, p. 50.
[109] Ibid, p.55.
[110] Ibid, p.57.
[111] William Trevor, *Mrs Eckdorf in O'Neill's Hotel* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1984)

they misrepresent their thoughts. Thus, these notebooks form a permanent (though never revisited) record of the sheer inaccuracy of ordinary spoken communication. What makes both Salinger's and Trevor's deaf characters such supreme 'confessor' figures is their deafness: nothing else about them matters. It is a stylised device — a literary 'prosthesis' in Mitchell and Snyder's terms — that goes unnoticed because such blank, unindividuated lack of communication is considered to be a natural function of deafness, forming part of the shared pool of assumptions about disability that exists between writers and readers, so that it is hard for either to distinguish metaphor from observation.

It is in this method of comparing metaphor and observation that Quayson's model of 'aesthetic nervousness' self-professedly diverges from Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis'. When Mitchell and Snyder specify the moment where the text 'stumbles', they do so in reference to the lived experience of disabled people themselves (which is so different from the depersonalised, 'programmatic' lives used as symbolic literary devices: life as a Deaf person cannot be reduced to the blissful isolation that Holden Caulfield imagines) — in other words, to a reference point external to the text. By contrast, Quayson locates the 'stumble' — or 'aesthetic nervousness' — within the text itself. He identifies it as an awkward moment of narrative contortion or 'collapse' that occurs when a text is forced to disrupt its own 'dominant protocols of representation' in order to force through a symbolic device.[112]

Applying Quayson's theory to McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, which was used by Panara to illustrate his category of the deaf 'tormented by isolation', clarifies an apparent misreading of Charles Bradshaw's that has been pointed out by Maren Linett.[113] Bradshaw describes 'deaf-mute' John Singer as 'someone incapable of language'.[114] As Linett notes, Singer is in fact presented as having remarkable linguistic capabilities: he 'signs fluently with his deaf friend Antonapoulos, reads the lips of English speakers, and writes grammatical English notes'.[115] Linett links Bradshaw's seeming error to a general public ignorance about the nature of language: 'That this assertion was maintained

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[112] Quayson, p. 26.
[113] Maren Linett, ''Seeing, Seeing, Seeing'': Deafness, Knowledge and Subjectivity in Elizabeth Bowen', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 59, 3 (Fall 2013), 465–93.
[114] Charles Bradshaw, 'Language and Responsibility: The Failure of Discourse in Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*', *Southern Quarterly,* 37, 2 (1999), 118–26.
[115] Linett, ''Seeing''', p. 466.

after peer review and copy-editing suggests that such identification of language with speech is widespread.'[116] Yet I would suggest that Bradshaw's assertion is not as mistaken as might first appear, because the text itself supports his reading. As Jennifer Murray comments: 'if Singer witnesses, he does not bear witness, nor does he transmit anything to anyone else, apart from Antonapoulos who seems either unable to understand what he is being told, or is completely indifferent to it.'[117] Like Salinger's 'deaf-mute' uncle and Trevor's deaf Mrs Sinnott, Singer provides a general, benevolent receptiveness that contains little or no understanding. For example, Singer is 'hopelessly confused' about the nature of the quarrel between Blount and Copeland: 'He had agreed with each of them in turn, though what it was they wanted him to sanction, he did not know.'[118] His comprehension of Mick is no better: 'her face was urgent and she said a good deal that he did not understand in the least'.[119] Even strangers 'buttonholed him for unexplainable reasons'.[120] This passive incomprehension is at odds with Singer's stated capabilities: the text 'stumbles' as the symbol forces itself through; it is a clear manifestation of Quayson's 'aesthetic nervousness'.

Examining Panara's category of the deaf used as 'melodramatic plot devices' from this theorised perspective is revealing. Davis believes that Defoe's choice of a deaf protagonist in *Duncan Campbell* must be seen in the context of his other marginalised protagonists who critique society from a position outside it.[121] Like the castaway Robinson Crusoe, the criminals Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack, and the prostitute Roxana, the deaf Duncan Campbell is an outsider 'deprived of all society'.[122] It is this ability to 'explore aspects of society by occupying the place of the other' through his deafness that makes Campbell a useful subject position.[123] Nor does deafness hamper Defoe's storytelling since its inconvenient aspects are sidestepped by giving Campbell a remarkable ability

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[116] Ibid, p. 466.
[117] Jennifer Murray, 'Approaching Community in Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*', *Southern Quarterly,* 42, 4 (2004), 107–14, p. 113.
[118] *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 281.
[119] Ibid, p. 281.
[120] Ibid, p. 281.
[121] The debate over Defoe's level of authorial involvement in this work does not materially affect this argument: the similarity that Linett notes persists. See J. R. Moore, *Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe* (Hamden, Connecticut, 1971); P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, *Defoe De-attributions: A Critique of J. R. Moore's Checklist* (London: A&C Black, 1994).
[122] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 887.
[123] Ibid, p. 887.

to overcome them. As Christopher Krentz has shown: 'the miracle of Campbell's literacy', along with other features such as his perfect lip reading and his ability to appear as if he can hear, is deeply unlikely.[124] This produces a type of aesthetic nervousness, *qua* Quayson: Campbell's deafness is used to situate him as an outsider in order to critique society, yet his thoroughly undeaf capabilities, required in order that he may assimilate as needed for the text's purpose, undermines the characterisation.[125]

It is notable that the status of characters' deafness is not merely questionable in the other works that Panara places into this category of 'plot devices'; it is explicitly mendacious. In *Peregrine Pickle,* Cadwallader Crabtree is first introduced as a 'misanthropical' old man 'utterly bereft of the sense of hearing' who is 'admitted into company on account of entertainment he offered by […] the pleasant mistakes to which he was subject from his infirmity'.[126] In fact, Crabtree is only pretending to be deaf in order to ridicule and satirise others. This charade supposedly allows him to escape being 'a member of any community' so that he may stand outside social life 'merely as a spectator […] abstracted from all interruption, danger and participation'.[127] Deafness is, as so often, equated with isolation and bestowing it upon Crabtree for this purpose is thus another manifestation of Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis'.

Whereas Mitchell and Snyder's model demands that we consider how literary interpretation compares with external reality, Quayson's does not require us to assess a character's abilities in terms of any real-life likelihood; his 'aesthetic nervousness' predominantly concerns itself with internal inconsistencies within a text. However, Quayson makes it clear that he construes 'aesthetic nervousness' in literature as analogous to the 'subliminal fear and moral panic' that the nondisabled feel about the disabled in life; wherein 'the disabled body sharply recalls to the nondisabled the provisional and temporary

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[124] Christopher Krentz, 'Duncan Campbell and the Discourses of Deafness', *Prose Studies*, 27, 1–2 (2005), 39–52, p. 44.

[125] Adding further ambiguity to the 'deaf' status of Defoe's fictionalised character, the real Duncan Campbell was constantly accused of being a fraud. Krentz points out that although many critics have opinions, it is impossible to know the truth: 'Campbell could have been born deaf, or he might have been a hearing fraud, but he also could have been late-deafened or hard of hearing. Similarly, he might have been mute, semi-mute, or a person who could speak readily.' (p. 48). As so often, interpretation has obscured reality.

[126] *Peregrine Pickle,* p. 402.

[127] Ibid, p. 408.

nature of able-bodiedness and indeed of the social frameworks that undergird the suppositions of bodily normality'.[128] He concludes:

> Ultimately, aesthetic nervousness has to be seen as coextensive with the nervousness regarding the disabled in the real world. The embarrassment, fear, and confusion that attend the disabled in their everyday reality is translated in literature and the aesthetic field into a series of structural devices that betray themselves when the disability representation is seen predominantly from the perspective of the disabled rather than from the normative position of the nondisabled.[129]

Thus, Quayson considers these symbolised literary presentations to be a refraction of social discomfort about real-life disability. In framing them this way he acknowledges that the moments of 'aesthetic collapse' caused by internal contradictions within texts also have a direct link to the external social world.[130] In the next section, I will combine Quayson's attention to finding contradictions inside a text with Mitchell and Snyder's insistence on explicitly linking such 'stumbles' to an external, socially determined reality. Thus, I hope to examine not just the roles that blindness and deafness play in literature but also the effect that these portrayals have on disability in life. To achieve this, the disability lens must be trained in both senses of the word: focused to bring sensory loss into view, and taught by repeated iteration to overcome the ingrained difficulty of recognising what is there.

### 1.4.2 The blind seer: a disability studies interrogation of Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight*

I now bring this lens to bear upon *Blindness and Insight*, a collection of essays by the influential deconstructionist critic Paul de Man. First published in book form in 1971, but written throughout the 1960s, these essays give a new twist to the by-now-familiar trope of blindness producing insight. More importantly (for the purpose of this thesis); when viewed from a disability studies perspective, they provide an illuminating model of the mechanism by which the metaphor is reversed such that stylised literary usages of 'blindness' and 'deafness' come to constitute what sensory loss *is* in real life. In basing this exposition on the work of a literary critic, rather than taking examples from primary works of literature, I am following the example of de Man himself. Many of the essays in *Blindness and Insight* study the language used by other literary critics as a 'preliminary to

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[128] Quayson, p. 14.
[129] Ibid, p. 19.
[130] Ibid, p. 25.

understanding literature in general'.[131] Believing that critics and authors share a literary language of metaphor and allusion, de Man constructed his theoretical insights using examples drawn from critical works. This was intended to expose 'the complexities of reading' as a necessary prior step to 'theorizing about literary language'.[132] The attention to the language used by critics clarified the general linguistic issues: 'The problems involved in critical reading reflect the distinctive characteristics of literary language.'[133]

De Man's central premise in these essays is that the allusive and metaphorical nature of literary language works against critics (and, by extension, primary authors too). Even as critics try to convey a particular meaning to the reader, their language undercuts these intentions; pointing the reader towards a quite different understanding (one which, says de Man, is in fact more productive than what was intended). This occurs at an unconscious level, via 'a negative movement that animates the critic's thought, an unstated principle that leads his language away from its asserted stand'.[134] De Man encapsulates this message by means of metaphor; choosing the familiar (and, in life, unfounded) idea of blindness containing compensatory insight: 'Critics' moments of blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight.'[135]

De Man describes 'Rhetoric and Blindness', the essay in which he makes this statement, as his most 'systematic formulation' of this 'deluding interplay between text and reader'.[136] Here, he looks at the work of several highly regarded literary critics and finds a 'recurrent pattern': underlying their 'categorical assertions' are 'more tentative utterances' that seem 'contradictory'.[137] This contradiction is never developed or synthesised (and, says de Man, can never be so), because 'a fundamental difference in the level of explicitness prevents the two statements from meeting on a common level of discourse; the one always lay hidden within the other as the sun lies hidden

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[131] Paul de Man, 'Foreword', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 1983), pp. viii–x, pp. viii–ix.
[132] Paul de Man, 'Foreword', in *Blindness and Insight*, p. viii.
[133] Ibid, p. ix.
[134] Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau', in *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 102–142, p. 103.
[135] Paul de Man, 'Rhetoric', p. 109.
[136] Paul de Man, 'Foreword', in *Blindness and Insight*, p. ix.
[137] Paul de Man, 'Rhetoric ', p. 102. In particular, de Man specifies Lukács, Blanchot, Poulet and the American New Critics.

within a shadow'.[138] The inherently metaphoric, allusive language used by critics causes them to be 'curiously doomed to say something quite different from what they meant to say'.[139] There is no separate, purely representational meta-language available for talking *about* literary texts; our discussions must be couched in the same figurative terms that primary authors use. The embedded metaphors work against our intended meanings. This leads de Man to a 'penetrating but difficult insight into the nature of literary language', an insight that cannot be perceived by the critics he discusses, who are 'in the grip of this peculiar blindness: their language could grope towards a certain degree of insight only because their method remained oblivious to the perception of this insight'.[140] It is only readers, and not writers, who can grasp the insight (which they do by noting the inherent conflict of the language used), because readers occupy 'the privileged position of being able to observe the blindness as a phenomenon in its own right' and can thus distinguish 'between statement and meaning'.[141]

It is, I contend, therefore ironic, but entirely to be expected, that de Man himself, in this piece of critical writing, seems oblivious to the fact that the physical state of blindness 'as a phenomenon in its own right' has very little to do with his thematic trope of blindness/insight. Seen through a disability studies lens, this figuration is a form of 'narrative prosthesis'; a crutch or 'opportunist metaphoric device' imposed upon the text to prop up its intended meaning. De Man wishes to trigger the familiar association between blindness and insight in his reader's mind. This, he hopes, will lend unconscious support to his argument, although the latter in fact has more to do with 'understanding' than 'seeing'. As Davis has pointed out, when de Man 'spun out a metaphoric relation between sight and insight', he was drawing upon a 'well-worn connection' which has no actual existence beyond that of a linguistic trope.[142] The elision between blindness used as a lack of 'seeing' and as a lack of 'understanding' causes de Man's metaphor to teeter, unacknowledged, between the two. A disability studies lens magnifies that elision: it is a type of 'aesthetic nervousness' whereby the text 'stumbles' over internal contradictions. Davis, writing well before Quayson's coining of the phrase, nevertheless notes the effect. He comments on the

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138 Ibid, pp. 102–03.
139 Ibid, pp. 105–06.
140 Ibid, p. 106.
141 Ibid, p. 106.
142 Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 883.

frequency with which de Man slides into characterising these 'blind' critics as 'deluded', 'within error', 'mistaken' or 'aberrant'.[143] With some irritation, Davis highlights the internal contradiction: that 'despite' the supposed association of blindness with insight, de Man 'nevertheless manages to use blindness as a metaphor for intellectual denseness that is then transcended by insight'.[144]

I suggest that de Man skates over the 'subliminal unease' of this contortion by inserting a fundamental split into the persistent 'blind soothsayer' trope. In his figuration, it is the critic who is blind, but the reader who has the compensating insight. This twist upon an old tale; separating the blindness/insight pairing into a blind/deluded critic and a sighted/insightful reader, removes the contradiction. However, it does so at the cost of undermining the entire 'blindness/compensating insight' figure, which becomes a somewhat meaningless 'sight/insight' pairing. This 'stumble', like those produced by the narrative prosthetic of giving a character a symbolic disability, goes largely unnoticed by readers — until the disability studies lens is trained to search it out. As a result, de Man succeeded in propping up the logic of his argument with an uneasy combination of two of the 'blindness' tropes that Jernigan has identified: 'compensatory insight' and 'foolishness'. Since both, as previously shown, are deeply familiar to readers, de Man can expect them to work for him, adding a sense of 'rightness' to his argument.[145]

In 'Lyric and Modernity', another essay from the *Blindness and Insight* collection, de Man turns to a critique of 'specific authors'.[146] As his foreword to the revised second edition makes clear, this was written in 'conjunction' with his more general interpretations drawn from the work of literary critics, and thus offers a 'pragmatically arrived at interaction between criticism and theory'.[147] He finds an ideal demonstration of the linguistic incompatibility of metaphor and representation in Paul Celan's poem *Tübingen, Janner*, which, like de Man's own essays, links blindness with language and comprehensibility. Referring to the

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[143] De Man, 'The Rhetoric of Blindness', pp. 104, 103, 110, 111.
[144] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 883.
[145] To avoid doubt, I should make clear that my critique is not of de Man's influential conclusions about language, but is rather, in the spirit of de Man's own work, a deconstruction of the terms in which he has couched this argument.
[146] Paul de Man, 'Foreword, Revised Edition', in *Blindness and Insight,* pp. xi–xii, p. xi.
[147] Ibid, pp. xi–xii, p. xii.

German Romantic poet Hölderlin's descent into madness, the poem begins: 'Eyes convinced to go blind'.[148] De Man interprets the metaphor for us:

> The blindness here is not caused by an absence of natural light but by the absolute ambivalence of a language. It is a self-willed rather than a natural blindness, not the blindness of the soothsayer but rather that of Oedipus at Colonus, who has learned that it is not in his power to solve the enigma of language.[149]

De Man defines this 'ambivalence' in terms of 'a language that is representational and nonrepresentational at the same time'.[150] He describes the two as fundamentally incompatible because 'the allegorical power of the language undermines and obscures the specific literal meaning of a representation'.[151] Thus, a 'mutually clarifying' dialectic engagement between a representational and an allegorical poetics would be an 'impossibility': 'Both are necessarily closed to each other, blind to each other's wisdom.'[152]

As de Man would perhaps consider inevitable, I suggest that even as he expresses this thought, the metaphorical nature of his language works in a way that is contrary to his intention. When he uses the figurative trope 'blind to each other's wisdom' to represent his meaning (of non-interaction), he appears oblivious to its unintended effect. There is, after all, no essential reason why a blind person should be cut off from wisdom; the transmission of which is often characterised as spoken. As Walter Ong has pointed out, 'Oral cultures contain great wisdom'.[153] De Man's meaning depends upon prejudice rather than fact: with an evocative phrase, he is triggering his reader's internalised acceptance of another 'well-worn connection', the link between blindness and foolishness (or 'intellectual denseness' as Davis puts it). By doing so, he also reinforces the inevitability of that connection in the reader's mind. With, presumably, no overt intention of contributing to the oppression of the blind, de Man's use of this figure of speech does exactly that. These ingrained metaphors of 'blindness', hammered into language by the force of repetition, imbue the word itself with

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[148] Paul Celan, 'Tübingen, Janner', in *Paul Celan: Selections,* ed. and trans. by Pierre Joris (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 79–80. For a critical commentary of this poem, see John Felstinger, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 172–74.

[149] Paul de Man, 'Lyric and Modernity', *Blindness and Insight,* pp 166–86, p. 183.

[150] Ibid, p. 183.

[151] Ibid, p. 183.

[152] Ibid, p. 183.

[153] Walter J. Ong, 'Orality-Literacy Studies and the Unity of the Human Race', *Oral Tradition*, 2, 1 (1987), pp. 371–82, p. 377.

essentialist significance. Until it is interrogated by a disability studies dialectic, the mechanism goes unnoticed.

One way to challenge this is through artistic defamiliarisation. In 2006, Joseph Grigely, a deaf American artist, published a poem-collage in the *journal of visual culture*. Entitled 'Blindness and Deafness as Metaphors', it consists of fifty-two quotations by diverse contemporary commentators, drawn from newspapers, literary scholarship and cultural studies. Each extract features the use of blindness or deafness in a metaphorical and pejorative way. Presented without comment, the arrangement uses juxtaposition to create a narrative that aims, as the abstract to the article states, to show the 'unseemly ease' with which our culture disseminates such 'metaphors of disablement'.[154] These figures of speech include: 'blind to reality, deaf to history'; 'deaf to any reasoning'; 'fallen on deaf ears'; the 'blindness, the deafness [...] of the male critical establishment'; 'tone deaf' on political issues; a cultural 'geography which is deaf and blocked'; 'deaf to some of life's most important questions'; depression that is 'like going blind [...] like going deaf'; 'taste-deafened' cooks; 'too blind to understand'; 'cross-cultural blindness'; 'blind waste'; 'blind insanity'; 'blind rage'; 'blind drunk'; 'blind worship'; 'blindness to detail'; 'willing blindness'. Amongst the sheer variety of topics, the monotony of the rhetoric is left to make its own point. Susannah B. Mintz has surmised that the success of Grigely's 'overtly political statement' comes from the context in which it is presented: 'a journal focused on visual as opposed to print culture'.[155] 'Looking' rather than 'reading' exposes the 'simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility' of sensory loss within language.[156] Mintz believes that this artistic method can challenge our cultural desensitisation: it 'might startle the reader to recognition of the insidious ways in which words are burdened with the marks of prejudice against disability, a still permissible form of discriminatory discourse'.[157]

Taking a more conventionally expository approach to similar ends, Julia Miele Rodas has deconstructed more than thirty linguistic metaphors of blindness, including 'blind alley', 'blind drunk', 'blind faith', 'blind justice', 'blind

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[154] Joseph Grigely, 'Blindness and Deafness as Metaphors: An Anthological Essay', *Journal of Visual ulture,* 5, 2 (2006), 227–41.
[155] Susannah B. Mintz, 'The Art of Joseph Grigely: Deafness, Conversation, Noise', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 6, 1 (2012), 1–16, pp. 8–9.
[156] Ibid, p. 9.
[157] Ibid, p. 8.

luck', 'blind spot', 'blinded by the light', 'love is blind', 'robbed blind', 'turn a blind eye'.[158] Her conclusion provides an explanation as to why de Man is likely to never even have considered the ramifications of the metaphor that he chose to convey his meaning: the tropes are so ingrained in our language that they have become more (mis)representation than metaphor. As Rodas points out, our concept of 'blindness' is mediated through figurative means:

> Without ever knowing a blind man […] we all share a common experience of blindness, all *know* blindness as part of this pre-instruction, an integral part of a language that teems with blindness and visuality. Even for actual blind people, blindness is always a mediated experience, informed, even defined by language and culture.[159]

The result of this insistent mediation, foregrounded by Grigely and Rodas, and displayed to clear effect in the works of Paul de Man, is a blurring of the boundary between metaphor and representation. This haziness fogs our minds and prevents us, like Bérubé or Mitchell and Snyder's Japanese colleague, from 'noticing' disabled characters in literature, or, like de Man or the distinguished cultural commentators cited in Grigely's *Metaphors* collage, from being disturbed by the subtext of the 'hypervisible yet invisible' ubiquity of pejorative figurations of sensory loss in everyday language.

In order to interrogate further this smearing of the line between metaphor and representation, I will examine an interesting parallel between de Man's 'enigma of language', quoted above in his commentary on *Tübingen, Janner*, and Helen Keller's 'mystery of language', referenced in my introduction.[160] The distinction that de Man makes between representational and metaphorical language is analogous to the one that Berger draws between indexical and symbolic language in his introduction to Keller's autobiography.[161] As I noted earlier, Berger highlights the question that Keller's mentor, Anne Sullivan, was 'constantly' asked: how could she teach a deafblind girl the meaning of abstract words such as 'love' and 'good'?[162] Sullivan's answer was disappointingly straightforward for those who hoped for more spiritual or supernatural involvement: 'through association and repetition'.[163] As Berger implies, Keller's

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[158] Julia Miele Rodas, 'On Blindness', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies,* 3, 2 (2009), 115–30.
[159] Ibid, p. 130.
[160] de Man, 'Lyric and Modernity', p. 183. Keller, *The Story of My Life,* p. 21.
[161] Berger. 'Editor's Preface', p. xii.
[162] Ibid, p. xiv.
[163] Macy, 'A Supplementary Account of Helen Keller's Life and Education', in *The Story of My Life,* pp. 197-316. p. 260.

experience here was different from that of able-bodied people only in the modality of the language employed (tactile rather than spoken or signed): for all of us, the meanings of abstract words 'become clear only in the overall context of using a language'.[164] As noted earlier, for Keller colour is a concept, like 'love' or 'good', which cannot be physically observed but which derives its meaning from shared contextual usage. Berger draws attention to another, similar passage by Keller:

> I know these are metaphors. Still I must prove with them, since there is nothing in our language to replace them. Deaf-blind metaphors to correspond do not exist and are not necessary. Because I can understand the world 'reflect', a mirror has never perplexed me.[165]

Berger glosses this as I have Keller's earlier example: 'As a deaf-blind person, she used metaphor where other people would speak literally.'[166] Translating this into de Man's terminology, one might say that when Keller speaks of colour, or a mirror-reflection, she is using metaphoric language as if it were merely representational.

I have an example of my own to interject here: my hearing loss means that I do not have enough pitch discrimination to sing in tune, or to have any idea if someone else is doing so. Tune, as a musical experience, means nothing to me. However, through explanation I understand the concept and through association I am perfectly at ease with figurative usage, being 'in tune' with an idea for example. I use such terms without any fear of there being a gap in my understanding. I suggest that, for Keller and for me, with no direct experience of colour/reflections/musical tune, such symbolic language loses its figurative nature. The metaphor, in effect, *becomes* the representation. Going a step further, I also suggest that for all the millions of people without sensory impairments, a similar process happens. Learned through association and repetition, with no direct representational experience to highlight the difference between actuality and trope, the pejorative metaphoric constructs of 'blindness' and 'deafness' have collapsed into supposed representations. Blindness *is* tragic, or foolish, or purifying. Deafness *is* isolation. All awareness of the symbol has drained away. In fact, even for those of us with such impairments, the same is often true: as Keller and Sullivan show, we all gain our understanding of words

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[164] Berger, 'Editor's Preface', p. xiii.
[165] Helen Keller, 'The World I Live In' in *The World I Live In & Optimism: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Dover, 2009), pp. 1–86, p. 53.
[166] Berger, 'Editor's Preface'*,* p. xiv.

through 'association and repetition'. Therefore, when de Man pairs blindness with insight (or intellectual denseness), the figurative usage is so 'well-worn' that it has faded into a general representation of 'blindness' and from there has become an inseparable part of what blindness *is* in our culture. Part of the reason this is so hard to challenge is that, as de Man argues, representational and metaphorical meanings work on different levels: they are never able to come into direct engagement with each other and so the conflict is never brought out into the open. The difficulty of doing so — or even recognising the need to do so — is why disability has been under-theorised. Left unchecked and uninterrogated, the acritical replication of these collapsed metaphors will continue to marginalise and subjugate people with sensory impairments for millennia to come. In the next section, I will examine a critique of literary deafness that offers a way of deconstructing these multiple levels of meaning: Lennard Davis's 'deafened moment'.

### 1.4.3 The deepening well of loneliness: Davis's 'deafened moment' and Derrida's 'non-presence'

For Davis, studying deafness in literature is not about 'simple thematic exposition' or even about portrayals of 'the infirmity that blocks communication'.[167] Rather, it is a means of exposing the 'ableist concepts' that 'permeate the literary/critical lexicon'.[168] In pursuit of this goal, Davis casts deafness as a 'critical modality' that can be used to deconstruct such apparently 'universal' staples of literary/critical discourse as 'silence', 'speaking', 'voice', 'mute' and 'dumb'. For Davis, these terms form part of an ableist lexicon that implicitly privileges vocalisation and excludes non-normative communication.[169] He proposes the concept of the 'deafened moment' as 'a contextual position, a dialectical moment in the reading/critical process that is defined by the acknowledgment on the part of the reader/writer/critic that he or she is engaged in an activity that does not involve speaking or hearing'.[170]

Beginning with the critic's perspective, Davis references Paul de Man, asking why 'blindness' rather than 'deafness' has been paired with 'insight'? Why is there no such term as 'invoice' or 'inhearing' for a compensatory wisdom

[167] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 882.
[168] Ibid, p. 882.
[169] Ibid, p. 882.
[170] Ibid, p. 881.

associated with deafness?[171] Blindness has been figured as a route to insight via its inverse, and Davis searches for an analogous metaphor for deafness. He tries out 'communication' and 'knowledge', but rejects both since they 'fail to clinch the voice in language as insight clinches the lost sight in blindness'.[172] Finally, he settles upon 'textuality' in its widest form: 'the text of language'.[173] Language itself is the fundamental power that deafness is made to figuratively oppose. In order to explain this 'deafness and textuality/language' pairing in more detail, I will discuss it in relation to a text that Davis does not mention, but which touches on several important areas of his analysis: Elizabeth Bowen's last novel, *Eva Trout* (1968).[174]

The eponymous Eva, a wealthy but emotionally deprived young woman, adopts (by dubious means) a baby son, Jeremy, who turns out to be deaf. For much of the novel, Jeremy has no language, until he is taught to lip-read and to form the shapes of sounds to the extent that it seems as if he can almost enunciate them. This is presented as an entry into comprehending the world around him; a change that divides him from his adoptive mother, whom he goes on later accidentally to shoot and kill.

Maren Linett has given an account of Bowen's engagement with deafness that disagrees with that of certain other critics. She rejects the conclusion that being 'outside of language' negates Jeremy's subjectivity, insisting that the novel rather gives evidence of Jeremy's 'abundant interiority'.[175] Although his thoughts are never entered into, his behaviour reflects them: 'Jeremy's silentness […] had manifold eloquent variations, outgoings, clamourings and inconsistencies, queries, ripostes. It took much to tie the tongue of his mind.'[176] Linett suggests that, rather than presenting a lack of subjectivity, Jeremy's languageless state is a device for '*questioning* of subjectivity' and finding 'the text's *answer:* that Jeremy's subjectivity is real'.[177] It is not an interior world that Linett believes Jeremy to lack, but knowledge of the exterior world

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[171] Ibid, p. 884–85.
[172] Ibid, p. 885.
[173] Ibid, p. 885.
[174] Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout, or, Changing Scenes* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).
[175] Linett, '"Seeing"'. Linett takes issue with Bennett and Royle's claim that Jeremy's deafness deprives him of identity. See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (New York: St Martin's, 1995).
[176] *Eva Trout*, p. 180.
[177] Linett, '"Seeing"', p. 485.

around him. As she points out, the text presents Jeremy's exclusively visual observation of the exterior world as a purely aesthetic awareness, devoid of the context that could give it meaning; until an unsanctioned outing with Iseult Arbles, Eva's former teacher, stirs his interest in the written word. Describing this moment afterwards, Iseult speaks of Jeremy's 'satiated eyes' and his 'weariness seeing, seeing, seeing without knowing, without knowing, without knowing'.[178] The stylisation of the repetition reinforces Linett's argument that there is a central theme in the text: of deafness in opposition to knowledge.

However, applying Davis's concept of the 'deafened moment' to Linett's critical position, I suggest that closer examination reveals a deeper, more fundamental opposition at work. Linett notes two important elements of this: first that Jeremy's access to the knowledge that he lacks comes through language; and secondly, that language within the text is presented as exclusively oral. Jeremy learns to lip-read and to mouth words in French. Sign language is never even mentioned. Linett positions this absence as both an implicit reflection of the educational landscape of the time and an explicit artistic choice. As I shall come on to discuss in more detail, the dominant mode of deaf education soon after its beginnings in the mid-eighteenth century and on to the 1970s was oral and was accompanied by a ruthless suppression of the use of Sign, which was wrongly thought to threaten the acquisition of speech.[179] Whilst this viewpoint could have been used to justify a deliberate exclusion of Sign by Eva or by Jeremy's teachers, it is notable that the text, which pays attention to Jeremy's education, giving details of the 'mouth exercises' he must perform in front of the mirror never raises Sign even as a possibility; it is erased from the fictional terrain.[180] Linett frames this 'exclusion' in Mitchell and Snyder's terms as a 'narrative prosthesis': an artificial device that enables Jeremy to be used 'as a mirror to reflect Eva's deficiencies'.[181] As Linett points out, if Jeremy acquired language

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[178] *Eva Trout*, p. 273.
[179] I follow Bauman by referring to sign-languages collectively as 'Sign': 'Sign includes all native sign languages — British Sign Language, American Sign Language, French Sign Language, Chinese Sign Language etc. but does not include manual versions of dominant languages such as Signed Exact English.' H. Dirksen L. Bauman, 'Towards a Poetics of Vision, Space, and the Body: Sign Language and Literary Theory', in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 315–31, p. 328, footnote 3. Sign is grammatically different from spoken languages and is not a transliteration of any spoken language, nor is it a gestural pantomime of visual images.
[180] *Eva Trout*, p. 298.
[181] Linett, '"Seeing"', p. 485.

via Sign rather than speech, then 'the novel's critique of visuality would lose its force'.[182] An artificial exclusivity must be set up around the connection between language and speech in order to shore up the novel's thematic concern. Linett notes the ensuing consequences: 'Such an equation of language and speech leads many to question or dismiss the subjectivity of those who do not use spoken languages, and shapes both fictional representations and real-life understandings of the deaf.'[183]

I suggest, however, that following Linett's direction of thought here leads to an ultimate conclusion that outstrips her own. Even only to the limited degree of being a denied possibility for Jeremy, were Sign to be allowed an existence in the narrative world of *Eva Trout*, then the binary opposition of deafness and knowledge would be undermined — Jeremy's lack of language would transform into a non-essentialist sociopolitical issue. By defining language in exclusively aural-oral terms; by making Jeremy's entry into knowledge-through-language a matter of faux sound production via mouth shapes, the text distances him from language even as he acquires it. The underlying pairing for 'deafness' thus shifts from Linett's proffered 'knowledge' to Davis's 'language/textuality'. For Jeremy, who must practice for hours in front of a mirror to make mouth shapes and must learn to read words from those of others, language is literally a text to be read. The distancing effects of this come between him and Eva, and she resolves to hand him over permanently to his shocked teacher: 'I think he should see *I* see he is free of me; and what better way than this to show him?'[184] Only as he runs towards her at the train station, toy revolver in hand, 'waving his weapon in salute', does she feel their bond once more ('this *was* Jeremy') as she 'joyfully' steps towards him.[185] The toy has been mixed up with a real revolver, and the novel ends abruptly when Eva is killed by the shot Jeremy unknowingly fires. The novel frames this shocking and superficially random death as the result of a 'concatenation of circumstances': the phrase is twice repeated in a farewell speech to Eva and Henry, and is specifically pointed out to the reader as the last words that Eva hears before her death.[186] These circumstances, which revolve around the necessity of language as speech, would be entirely averted were Sign to be a natural part of the fictional landscape.

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[182] Ibid, p. 486.
[183] Ibid, p. 466.
[184] *Eva Trout*, p. 289.
[185] Ibid, p. 302
[186] Ibid, p. 302.

To fully understand why Sign is thus denied space in fictional worlds we must turn to the real world. Taking a historical approach, Davis's enquiry into the 'deafened moment' from the perspective of the reader requires us to appreciate that before the eighteenth century the 'reader's position *vis à vis* narrative is in fact occupied by 'listeners'. The deaf were entirely excluded from this oral culture and were thereby, as Oliver Sacks has described, subjected to the worst kinds of deprivation:

> The situation of the prelingually deaf, prior to 1750, was indeed a calamity: unable to acquire speech, hence 'dumb' or 'mute'; […] confined to a few rudimentary signs and gestures; […] treated by the law and society as little better than imbeciles — the lot of the deaf was manifestly dreadful.[187]

As Davis describes, in this long aural-oral stage of history, the contextual position of the blind and the deaf in relation to literature are radically different: 'blindness is no bar to creating oral narrative, but it is hard to imagine Homer the deaf and mute bard'.[188] H. Dirkson Bauman, however, requires us to do exactly that, when he asks: 'If the Deaf poet had been mythologized as the blind poet has been, would literature have developed differently?'[189] The answer is straightforward — yes, indeed, because the Deaf poet's natural language is Sign, which must thereby have been raised to an equal status with Speech, as alternative modalities of language, in stark contrast to the existing situation in which, as Davis has said, 'most people assume we are no longer dealing with language as such' when they consider Sign.[190]

Comparing the available access of deaf and blind people to (or exclusion from) the prevailing methods of literary production, Davis concludes that: 'deafness is set up in opposition to the oral culture of pre-eighteenth-century Europe, and blindness would appear to create an opposition to print culture.'[191] Following Walter Ong's postulation of four periods of human development — oral, script, print and electronic — Davis links sight and hearing to each.[192] Deafness was a bar to narrative not only for the oral period, but continued to be so for a thousand years after the development of writing because until print became widely available, hearing remained the 'paramount sense' for literary

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[187] Sacks, pp. 13–14.
[188] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 887.
[189] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 316.
[190] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 884.
[191] Ibid, p. 887.
[192] Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

transmission.[193] Indeed, until the eighteenth-century movement in Europe and America towards educating the deaf, there was no access for them to the written word either.[194]

At this point, Davis locates a sharp reversal in roles: 'The novel and print technology permitted the deaf, for the first time, to be part of the collective narrative tradition.'[195] Now enabled by education to read, the deaf have switched places with the blind, who, before the widespread use of Braille or the invention of computer scanners, cannot access print: 'Relatively suddenly, the whole metaphorics of the body has to be rearranged.'[196] Yet, despite the seeming logic of this argument, Davis finds that literature does not reflect such a switch. Rather than becoming 'the reader incarnate', the deaf person remains relentlessly cast as Other within print culture.[197] Whether figures of ridicule to be the butt of 'eh-what?' jokes, like old Mrs Bates in Jane Austen's *Emma* whose deafness is satirised as 'very trifling you see — just nothing at all. By only raising my voice, and saying anything two or three times over, she is sure to hear'; or tragic, like Victor Hugo's Quasimodo whose hearing loss is 'the last straw […] truly horrible'; deaf people are no less alienated than in pre-Enlightenment literature.[198]

Davis links this state of affairs to a prevailing bias in Western culture towards speech over writing. Derrida's analysis, in *Of Grammatology*, of the binary opposition between these two forms of discourse has revealed the inherent logocentrism in the 'Western concept of language', which attaches '*in*

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[193] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 887.

[194] For a history of the education of the deaf, and the suppression of Sign, see Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1985). The main part of the book is written as if from the point of view of Laurent Clerc, a nineteenth-century deaf Frenchman, educated in Sign at a school founded by the Abbé de l'Epée, who travelled with Thomas Gallaudet to America to set up the first deaf school there, using Sign to teach. The final two chapters, written in the persona of Lane, after Clerc's death, describe the aggressive ideological movement against Sign, led by Alexander Graham Bell, amongst others, which resulted in the infamous International Congress of Educators of the Deaf held at Milan in 1880, at which hearing educators of the deaf from throughout Europe passed a resolution to proscribe Sign. Deaf educators were excluded from the vote, and the results were catastrophic for deaf people, whose education was blighted by this enforced estrangement from their natural language.

[195] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 887.

[196] Ibid, p. 891.

[197] Ibid, p. 891.

[198] Jane Austen, *Emma* (New York: Signet, 1964), p. 125; Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame of Paris* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1978), p. 368.

*general* […] to voice, to hearing, to sound and breadth, to speech'.[199] This construction of speech as *language*, rather than as *a mode* of language, has tended 'to confine writing to a secondary and instrumental function', limited to conveying speech from an absent speaker.[200] Davis summarises Derrida's position: 'Western civilization has privileged the oral form of discourse as the essence of language, writing being only a trace of the spoken word.'[201] This, as Davis concludes, makes it easier to understand why, even after the dissemination of print and technology, deafness continues to be figured in a seemingly illogical opposition to the written word; it retains its opposition to an underlying primary act of speech.

Coming to the third of his categories; deafness from the position of the writer, or in deconstructionist terms the position of the text, Davis sets this opposition within a more general context. When language is primarily defined as speech, then the fundamental opposite of language, even in print form, is silence. Thus, deafness is a figuration of this primary opposition.[202] Davis finds that silence is used to represent an 'unmediated absence' in modern literature.[203] I will expand upon the brief analysis he gives of Joyce's short story 'A Painful Case' (1914), in order to give fuller expression to this conceptualisation. Joyce's protagonist, James Duffy, is a man 'without any communion with others'; so convinced of 'the soul's incurable loneliness' that he rejects Emily Sinico, a married woman who is his sole source of conversational intimacy, when she shows sexual interest in him.[204] Four years later, he learns of her degrading, drunken death, hit by a train as she tried to cross the tracks to buy alcohol. His first reaction is to be repulsed by the squalor of it and disgusted with himself for having ever construed her as 'his soul's companion'.[205] Later, however; wandering out into the darkness 'he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his' and with this comes a sense of responsibility. His rejection caused the loneliness that must have driven her into alcoholism: he 'sentenced'

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[199] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 7.
[200] Ibid, p. 8.
[201] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 884.
[202] Davis points out that this figuration is not even correct: 'deaf people experience life filled with speech. But what they speak is sign language.' 'Deafness and Insight', p. 893.
[203] Ibid, p. 888.
[204] James Joyce, 'A Painful Case', in *Dubliners* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 103–14, pp. 105, 107.
[205] Ibid, p. 111.

the one person who loved him to 'a death of shame'.[206] This epiphany undercuts the rigid ethical code by which he has lived: he 'felt his moral nature falling to pieces'.[207] The feeling of her nearness fades together with the imagined sound of her voice, and the story ends: 'He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone.'[208] As Davis suggests, this is 'an existential silence that indicates the absence of God or any form of meaning'.[209]

There is no deafness in the story, but the set of oppositions structuring the text are those that Derrida identifies, which produce the familiar meaning of deafness as an exclusion from language. Duffy is not deaf, but his spoken interaction is minimal; only with Mrs Sinico does he find conversation, and through it, intimacy, as 'their thoughts entangled'.[210] In every other way the written word structures his life, as indicated by the detailed description of the books and writing materials that furnish his room. Within the terms of the story, it is clear that writing cannot constitute true communication: it is no substitute for speech. When Mrs Sinico asks him 'why he did not write out his thoughts' on politics, Duffy responds 'with careful scorn' that this would be a pointless attempt at engagement: 'To compete with phrasemongers […]? To submit himself to the criticisms of an obtuse middle-class [...]?'[211] When he learns of Mrs Sinico's death, he does so through the distancing medium of print: a newspaper report, whose 'threadbare phrases' evoke no empathy within him.[212] It is speech that opens his heart, when in the darkness 'he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear'.[213] When that presence leaves him, the loss is absolute: constituting the 'existential silence' that Davis describes.

This hierarchy of communication, which privileges speech over writing, can also be read as a privileging of 'presence' over 'absence'. The felt presence of Mrs Sinico's voice in Duffy's ear engages his sympathies in a way that her absence amongst the newspaper's 'threadbare phrases' cannot. This connection of presence with speech is not Joyce's alone; it has a long cultural history that Derrida has critiqued:

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[206] Ibid, p. 113.
[207] Ibid, p. 113.
[208] Ibid, p. 114.
[209] Davis, 'Deafness and Insight', p. 888.
[210] 'A Painful Case', p. 107.
[211] Ibid, p. 107.
[212] Ibid, p. 111.
[213] Ibid, p. 113.

> If for Aristotle, for example, 'spoken words […] are the symbols of mental experience […] and written words are the symbols of spoken words', it is because the voice, *producer of the first symbols,* has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind.[214]

Crucially, it is not the act of producing speech that demonstrates this proximal presence, nor the act of receiving another's speech, but rather 'the system of hearing-oneself-speak'.[215] The perceived close connection between speech and thought 'remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and ideality of meaning'.[216]

As Bauman has identified, in a deaf context phonocentrism becomes audism, which he defines as a 'metaphysical orientation that links human identity with speech'.[217] This privileging of the aural-oral system had tragic results in the actions of deaf educators who, defining language as necessarily spoken-heard, failed to recognise the true nature of signed languages as 'fully expressive, natural systems of communication'.[218] As Linett describes:

> from the late nineteenth century through the 1970s, the oralist movement dominated educational theory and practice for deaf children; oralism advocated banning signed languages from deaf schools and replacing them with training in lip-reading and speech.[219]

This had devastating effects on generations of deaf children who were forced to endure, as Sacks has described, an 'arduous' process of being taught to make sounds that they had no ability to hear nor therefore to self-modulate. This frustrating task occupied dozens of hours each week for at least five to eight years. The result was appalling: the loss of time for teaching on other subjects, combined with a suppression of Sign that meant the children gained none of the informal learning that comes from communicating with each other, destroyed any hope of a general education. An intelligent child would emerge as 'a functional

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[214] Derrida, p. 11.

[215] Ibid, p. 8.

[216] Ibid, p. 16.

[217] H-Dirksen L. Bauman, 'Audism: Exploring the Metaphysics of Oppression', *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education,* 9, 2 (Spring 2004), 239–46, p. 245.

[218] Stephen R. Anderson, *Languages: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 8. Anderson adds that 'It is clear that speech and signing are simply two different modalities in which the human capacity for language can be expressed'.

[219] Linett, '"Seeing"', p. 480. For a history of the attempt to eradicate Sign language in America, see Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

illiterate, who has, at best, a poor imitation of speech'.[220] The enormous investment that went into this misguided process came from 'the almost universal delusion' that sign languages are 'rudimentary, primitive, pantomimic'.[221] In fact, as Sacks himself learned with surprise, Sign (in whatever national or regional variety) is 'a complete language, capable of expressing not only every emotion but every proposition and enabling its users to discuss any topic, concrete or abstract, as economically and effectively and grammatically as speech'.[222]

It should now be clear that figurations of deafness in literature must be read against this sociolinguistic background of oppression and fundamental misinterpretation. This phonocentrism/audism is articulated within Panara's category of 'the deaf tormented by isolation', discussed in section 1.2.4. The pantomimic gestures of Ionesco's 'deaf-mute' Orator in *The Chairs* are as much a futile non-communication as his guttural non-words and do not reflect the true communicative powers of Sign. Similarly, as discussed in section 1.4.1, John Singer's fluency in Sign language is never allowed to constitute communication. Singer never has a reciprocal conversation with his fellow 'mute' Antonapoulos: 'He had never known just how much Antonapoulos understood and what he was thinking.'[223] After Antonapoulos becomes ill, Singer's frustration grows: 'He would shake his friend by the shoulders until he was very tired and explain things over and over with his hands. But nothing did any good.'[224] Linett has listed other modernist fictions which, like *Eva Trout,* 'artificially create the isolation of deaf characters by removing them from any possibility of a signing community', such as Eudora Welty's 'The Key' and 'First Love', and Flannery O'Connor's 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own'.[225] It is necessary for the attribute of deafness to 'mean' isolation for the benefit of wider thematic concerns.

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[220] Sacks, p. 26. For a personal encounter with such a disastrous education, see David Wright's experience of being sent to an oralist school after being deafened at the age of eight, in *Deafness* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969). For a full account of the background and progression of this educational method, see Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears.*

[221] Ibid, p. 20.

[222] Ibid, p. 20.

[223] *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter,* p. 11

[224] Ibid, p. 12

[225] Linett, '"Seeing"', p. 487. Linett notes that in 'The Key', the two deaf characters who marry and sign together are represented as 'unable to speak, lonely because of that' (p. 40) whereas in the other texts there is only a single deaf character. Eudora Welty, 'The Key' and 'First Love', in *Stories, Essays and*

As a category in life, 'deaf' contains enormous variety. The charity Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the Royal National Institute for the Deaf) reports that more than ten million people in the UK, or one in six of the population, have a hearing loss.[226] While two-thirds of these are above retirement age, over 45,000 are children, half of whom were born deaf. Of these children born deaf, only 10% are born into families with a history of deafness.[227] Six million people in the UK would benefit from wearing hearing aids, but only two million do so, 700,000 of whom do not wear them regularly. Over 800,000 people are severely or profoundly deaf; 150,000 of these became so as adults, suddenly or gradually, through trauma, infection or the use of ototoxic drugs. 356,000 people have combined hearing and sight impairments. 10% of the population have constant mild tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears). The number of sign language users is not reliably recorded: the British Deaf Association claim that it is the preferred language of 70,000 profoundly Deaf people, although other sources tend to use a more conservative figure of 50,000.[228] The experience of deafness is very different across all these different contexts, yet the use of 'deaf' in language is stuck in the narrow concept of extreme isolation.

Adding to this variety of deafness is a variety of personal contexts. As Bauman reminds us: 'a person cannot be *purely* Deaf apart from the confluence of multiple subject positions — nationality, race, gender, class, disability, sexual preference — just as one cannot be *purely* Female, Mexican or Asian.'[229] Deafness, in all its varieties, needs to be understood as part of a composite picture, not forced into a straitjacketed ultimate of 'unknowability' that

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*Memoirs*, ed. by Richard Ford and Michael Kreyling (New York: The Library of America, 1998), pp. 37–47, 185–203. Flannery O'Connor, 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own', in *Complete Stories* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp. 145–56.

[226] 'Facts and Figures on Hearing Loss and Tinnitus', *Action on Hearing Loss* (July 2011) <http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/~/media/Files/Factsheets/Deaf%20awareness/pdf/Facts%20and%20figures%20on%20deafness%20and%20tinnitus%20July%202011.ashx> [accessed 12 October 2015]. Unless specifically stated, the other statistics in this paragraph are also taken from this report.

[227] 'Newborn Hearing Screening', *National Deaf Children's Society* <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/audiology/newborn_hearing_screening/> [accessed 12 October 2015]

[228] 'What is BSL?', *The British Deaf Association* <https://www.bda.org.uk/what-is-bsl> [accessed 12 October 2015]

[229] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 321. Bauman makes this point while warning of the dangers of reinscribing audist essentialism in the construction of a too-rigid Deaf identity.

overwhelms all other aspects of personhood. Similarly, Kleege has resisted narrow definition in terms of her blindness: 'Of all the adjectives I can use to describe myself, *disabled* is only one of many and not always the first I mention.'[230] The phenomenological experience of sensory loss is mutable and highly dependent upon the cultural context. Challenging a narrow definition of D/deafness (whether from a positively intended, too rigid Deaf identity perspective or from a negatively constituted, unthinkingly audist one), Bauman has re-envisioned the place of Sign, from being outside language to being its 'precondition'; supplanting the voice and setting Derridean *différance* into motion.[231]

Commenting on Rousseau's imagined society of deaf-mutes, Derrida claims that the true origin of language must be not the faculty of speech but the ability to create language out of whatever power of articulation is available:

> It is once again *the power of substituting one organ for another, of articulating space and time*, sight and voice, hand and spirit, it is this *faculty of supplementarity* which *is* the true 'origin' — or nonorigin — of languages: articulation in general.[232]

Bauman thus contends that:

> seen through deconstructive lenses, Sign dilates its sphere of influence from the socio-political site of the Deaf community to the entire history of Western 'hearing' metaphysics […] — if it weren't for the fact that Derrida fails to engage theoretical issues of deafness or signing to any significant degree.[233]

Nevertheless, as Bauman asserts: 'If nonphonetic writing interrupts the primacy of the voice, deafness signifies the consummate moment of disruption.'[234] Pointing out that Signers cannot fully see what they are signing, Bauman argues that 'there is always a trace of nonpresence in signing', and posits that Sign, rather than writing, should have been Derrida's 'supplement par excellence'.[235]

With its kinetic-spatial-visual grammar and syntax, so entirely different from speech yet equally linguistically complex, Sign, more than writing, 'displaces the *proper place of* the sentence' and thus 'marks the point where the supplement proposes itself as supplement of supplement, sign of sign, *taking the*

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[230] Georgina Kleege, 'Disabled Students Come Out: Questions Without Answers', in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. by Snyder et al., pp. 308–16, p. 311.
[231] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 318.
[232] Derrida, p. 241.
[233] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 317.
[234] Ibid, p. 317.
[235] Ibid, p. 317; Derrida, p. 281.

*place of* a speech already significant'.[236] Had Derrida entered into a theoretical engagement with deafness and Sign, Bauman conjectures, he might have come to expand Sign as he did Writing to signify *différance,* since Sign, even more starkly than writing, is a nonphonetic language that is not merely a copy of speech.[237] Building on this philosophical basis, Bauman moves into a consideration of Sign poetry, which is necessarily performative. He underlines the importance of recognising that it 'both *is* and *is not* "literature," that it is akin to hearing literary practices but also cannot be contained by such practices'.[238] Pointing out how '"literature" derives from the Latin *litere,* or "letter"', Bauman reminds us that '"literature" has been formed within exclusive practices of spoken and written languages.'[239] Its linear forms are the 'structural embodiment of hearing forms of literature'.[240] Yet, rather than setting up Sign in opposition to speech, Bauman recommends the establishment of a philosophical basis for theorising Sign as 'a rare opportunity to reconsider what literature is'.[241] Taking heed of this, I propose in the next section to direct this deconstructive approach towards the semiotics of what I have called the 'collapsed metaphor'; in order to consider further how this linguistic process produces social effects.

### 1.4.4 The embodied metaphor: finding an attitudinal response to metaphors of 'blindness' and 'deafness'

Bauman gives an admirably brief summary of C.S. Peirce's semiotics, which I will reproduce here for ease of reference:

> According to Peirce, signs (not ASL 'signs', but rather anything that produces meaning) can take three different forms: icon (representation by likeness, e.g. portrait, onomatopoeia), index, (representation by relation, e.g. smoke to fire, temperature to fever) and symbol (representation by arbitrary signifiers, e.g. conventional words).[242]

As Bauman goes on to note, Sign, unlike speech and writing, 'is most often associated with iconic signification'.[243] By this he means that Sign-concepts tend to bear a stylised physical resemblance to their referent. This is a sensitive issue since the perceived iconicity of Sign was a bulwark of the Oralist argument for its

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[236] Ibid, p. 281.
[237] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 319.
[238] Ibid, p. 322.
[239] Ibid, p. 322.
[240] Ibid, p. 322.
[241] Ibid, p. 324.
[242] Ibid, p. 324. ASL refers to American Sign Language.
[243] Ibid, p. 324.

suppression. Jennifer Esmail, theorising the relative absence of Signing deaf people (as opposed to speaking deaf ones) amongst the plethora of characters with disabilities in Victorian fiction, describes 'the cultural prejudice that constructed signed languages as more embodied, and therefore more iconic, concrete, and primitive than spoken languages'.[244] As a result, the iconicity of Sign has been downplayed to some extent within the field of deaf studies. However, there is growing support for an interesting counter-argument: that spoken language contains greater iconicity than had previously been assumed.

Augusto Ponzio has argued for the inherent iconicity of language, by which he implicitly means spoken/written language. Like Bauman, he begins from a consideration of Peirce's semiotic categories of icon, index and symbol. Thereby, he uncontroversially defines an icon as 'characterized by a relation of similarity between the sign and its object'.[245] In this, the icon differs from an index, which is directly correlated with its referent, and a symbol, which is only arbitrarily connected with its referent through cultural convention.[246] The metaphor, one of the three sub-classes of the icon in Peirce's schema (the other two being images and diagrams), is a form of 'verbal iconicity' in which the similarity works by 'parallelism, a comparison' created through a 'modeling by language' that concentrates on 'a few characteristics of what is being compared […] leaving aside all the rest'.[247]

I suggest that precisely this discarding of 'all the rest' is what produces both Quayson's 'aesthetic nervousness' and Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis'. The 'few characteristics' on which the parallel with blindness or deafness depends are expanded to constitute the whole meaning of the blind or deaf individual. Successfully employing blindness or deafness as iconic signs of referents such as insight, tragedy and isolation depends upon excluding a vast amount of the actual experience of being blind or deaf. As Liat Ben-Moshe has asserted in relation to José Saramago's parable-novel *Blindness* (1995): 'Using

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[244] Jennifer Esmail, '"I Listened With My Eyes": Writing Speech and Reading Deafness in the Fiction of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins', *ELH,* 78, 4 (Winter 2011), 991–1020, p. 992.
[245] Augusto Ponzio, 'Metaphoric Image and Iconic Likeness', *Semiotica*, 181, 1 (2010), 275–81. Ponzio summarises from *The Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce*, ed. by C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss, & A. W. Burks, 8 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931–1935, 1958), II (1932), pp. 254–64.
[246] Both my introduction and section 1.4.2 refer to Peirce's 'indexical' and 'symbolic' categories with respect to Berger's discussion of Keller's acquisition of language. The 'iconic' is the third and, for Peirce, primary member of the triad.
[247] Ponzio, p. 276.

Blindness as a metaphor is problematic because it has a real referent, people with visual impairments.'[248] Standing behind the abstract concept of 'blindness' or 'deafness' are living people with sensory losses, and Ben-Moshe, in line with general disability studies thinking, suggests that the qualities of the iconicised 'blindness' affect our conceptualisation of that real referent.

Ben-Moshe's point is important because it highlights a crucial complication of the semiotics. I will consider it, as she does, in terms of Saramago's novel (which, as I shall come on to discuss in more detail in section 1.5, exemplifies both Jernigan's categories of blindness as 'dehumanisation' and as 'parable'). A mysterious 'white disease' is spreading across the unnamed landscape, causing mass panic as it blinds almost everyone.[249] When all efforts to contain this epidemic of 'white evil' fail, civilisation breaks down. Rubbish is uncollected; rape, murder and theft go unpoliced; food production halts. Ben-Moshe conceives blindness here as a signifier of ultimate dependence:

> society fails to function not because of people's blindness, but because the government is not able to provide the ordinary services that citizens are routinely dependent upon for survival: the production and distribution of food, water, and electricity; the maintenance of the infrastructure of transportation and communication; and so on. However, in the novel, as in daily life, dependence is projected onto the people who are perceived as embodying it on a daily basis, that is, people with disabilities.[250]

The concept of 'blindness' then is the signifier for the referent of 'dependency' in Saramago's fictional world (which thereby fits Jernigan's category of blindness as 'foolishness or helplessness'). But as Ben-Moshe has already pointed out 'blindness' also operates as the signifier for the referent of 'blind people in the real world'. The metaphor points two ways: towards a fictional theme and towards real-life human beings. I would suggest that it does so through two elisions of Peirce's semiotic categories. First, the relationship between the physical state of blindness and the fictional theme of dependency is in fact a symbolic one (based on arbitrariness) rather than a metaphoric one (based on iconic likeness). The 'likeness' of the apparently metaphoric relationship is a moral and existential straitjacket placed on the physical state of blindness to suit Saramago's theme. Secondly, the metaphoric relationship that Ben-Moshe

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[248] Liat Ben-Moshe, 'Infusing Disability in the Curriculum: The Case of Saramago's *"Blindness"*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 26, 2 (Spring 2006), n.pag. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/688/865> [accessed 14 October 2015]
[249] José Saramago, *Blindness*, trans. by Juan Sager (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 117.
[250] Ben-Moshe, n.pag.

identifies between this cultural construct of 'blindness' and 'real blind people' is, in fact, widely understood as an indexical relationship: the concept of sensory loss naturally points to people with sensory loss. However, since the concept of 'blindness' is a distorted one, streamlined to fulfil more perfectly its thematic literary purpose, it necessarily throws a distorted shadow on its referent: real blind people. This asymmetry and blurring of boundaries causes the 'collapse' that I have identified, whereby the metaphor is read in reverse. Via Saramago's artificially conceptualised state of 'blindness', honed to predicate dependency, the two referents, muddling across a variety of semiotic relationships, tighten their association: the existential state of 'helplessness' comes to constitute the 'meaning' of blind people in the everyday world.

The distortion of semiotic boundaries required to make this jump is in itself an illustration of Grigely's assertion that Peirce's taxonomy of signs 'is essentially an unstable ontology' whereby 'the attribution of sign values — iconicity, indexicality and arbitrariness — is part of a dynamic process by which a reader circumscribes frames of reference as part of the act of reading'.[251] This reader-response approach leads Grigely to discover how loose the metaphoric association of 'likeness' can be: 'An interpretative model of iconicity does not require a factual similarity between a sign and its referent, but merely an impression that similitude of some kind or form exists — whether or not it actually does.'[252] Bauman uses Grigely's analysis to cast iconicity as less of a formal element of the text and more 'a form of perception'.[253] On this basis, he calls for a phenomenological approach to Sign poetry that 'inquires into the ways that readers are themselves producers of literary texts'.[254] Building on Bauman's contention that 'while Sign literature is a minority cultural practice, it nevertheless has profound implications for the dominant group's understanding of language, literature and culture', I propose now to cast verbal iconicity (in the form of metaphor) analogously to his conception of Sign literature; as a performative

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[251] Joseph Grigely, 'The Implosion of Iconicity', *Word & Image Interactions: A Selection of Papers Given at the Second International Conference on Word and Image,* Universität Zürich (August 27-31,1990), ed. by Martin Heusser (1993), 243–50, p. 243.
[252] Ibid, p. 246.
[253] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 325.
[254] Ibid, p. 325.

process, and therefore to take the same phenomenological approach to deciphering its reception.[255]

In order to interrogate what I have called the 'collapse' of metaphoric 'blindness/deafness' (into seeming representation) on this basis, I will now turn towards an empirically grounded trend in research taking place within the field of social cognition, which undertakes scientific study of the cognitive events underlying social thoughts and attitudes. This trend forms an enquiry into the specific ways in which metaphors both enable and constrain human understanding of their conceptual referents. Mark J. Landau, Brian P. Meier and Lucas A. Keefer provide an overview of a body of research which, taken as a whole, suggests that we largely construe the world in terms of conceptual metaphors that enable us to understand abstract concepts in terms of more concrete ones.[256] Landau et al. use this research to define this mechanism as a 'metaphoric transfer strategy', which they differentiate from the two prevailing models of social cognition; traditional schema and embodied cognition.[257] They explain that these existing perspectives describe how people 'interpret and evaluate social stimuli using their knowledge about similar stimuli', whereas: 'if we listen to how people ordinarily talk about the social world, we observe them using an impressive array of metaphors that liken social concepts to superficially dissimilar things.'[258]

Their study supports my assertion that Ponzio's 'leaving aside all the rest' can explain the stubborn resistance to sociological change that Davis has found in metaphors of blindness and deafness. Citing empirical research, Landau et al. note that the ways in which we cognitively process metaphors 'actively inhibit those elements of the metaphorically related concepts that are not isomorphic and are therefore irrelevant for understanding the target concept'.[259] For

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[255] Ibid, p. 327.

[256] Mark J. Landau, Brian P. Meier and Lucas A. Keefer, 'A metaphor-enriched Social Cognition', *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 6 (2010), 1045–67.

[257] Traditional schema describes the model by which people assign stimuli to categories and draw on previous knowledge about that category to interpret a new situation. Embodied cognition posits that mental concepts are also bound up with physical sensations, motor activity and bodily states, for example blood rushing to the face when remembering a faux-pas. Landau et al., pp. 1060–61.

[258] Ibid, p. 1060. Examples given of the everyday metaphoricity of language include people as 'deep and shallow, bright and full, colorful and colorless, rigid and elastic […]. We are joined to people with ties and bonds; classes are high and low; groups exert pressure.'

[259] Ibid, p. 1060.

example, research participants making use of the metaphor 'my lawyer is a shark' show marked delays processing accurate information about sharks (such as their superior swimming skills) that is not relevant to the metaphor. I suggest that this is directly analogous to the situation where, familiar with the embedded concept of deafness as isolation, even skilled readers and writers struggle to comprehend deafness in any other manner, despite being surrounded by deaf people, or possibly being to some degree deaf themselves (since, as the previous section pointed out, one in six people in the UK have a hearing loss).

Landau et al.'s 'emphasis on the epistemic function served by metaphors' also provides an empirical foundation for Ponzio's assertion that the creation of metaphor is far from being the end result of creativity within language.[260] Ponzio states that, once formed, the metaphor itself turns into 'an expressive modality' that becomes 'the motor behind human reasoning'.[261] Landau et al.'s survey of cognitive research supports this:

> Multiple studies show that manipulating perceptions, sensations, and other psychological states produces metaphor-consistent changes in how social information is attended to, recalled, interpreted, and used to make judgments. […] Taken as a whole, these empirical findings, which demonstrate diverse manifestations of metaphors' influence in a wide range of social psychological phenomena, support the claim that metaphors shape how people conceptualize — and not merely talk about — multiple aspects of the social world.[262]

This process of thinking-via-metaphor is the one that this thesis has shown in action within de Man's *Blindness and Insight* essays, and in the fifty-two examples from contemporary cultural comment that Grigely wove into his poem-collage. As previously discussed, the writers themselves are often entirely unaware of the process. Ponzio expands on this:

> The processes of metaphorization are present in discourse even when we are not aware of it and, in fact, we may distinguish between metaphorical routes that are practiced automatically by speakers and would seem to present simple, 'literal' meaning, on the one hand, and metaphorical trajectories, on the other that are immediately recognizable as such, with a strong charge of inventiveness, creativity and innovation […].[263]

This is supported by the array of embedded metaphors that Landau et al. identify within everyday language, all used without thought to their metaphoricity: 'We

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[260] Ibid, p. 1059.
[261] Ponzio, pp. 277–78.
[262] Landau et al., p. 1058.
[263] Ponzio, p. 277.

say that a man thinks straight; that he faces a hard decision; that his feelings have cooled.'[264] Thus, Ponzio's process of 'automatic practice' within general discourse produces what I have called the 'collapse' into mere representation (by which I mean seemingly 'simple' and 'literal' meanings) of the metaphors involving conceptualised 'deafness' and 'blindness'.

Now, I wish to address an apparent flaw in my argument. I have asserted, following Ben-Moshe's lead, that the metaphoric 'collapse' in representation occurs when the metaphor (of 'blindness/deafness' signifying 'tragedy/helplessness/dehumanisation/isolation' etc.) is 'read in reverse' to confer traits of the existential referent on blind and deaf people in life. However, Landau et al.'s review of the research leads them to state with confidence that 'metaphoric transfer effects' 'typically' operate in one direction only: from a more relatively concrete signifier to the more relatively abstract referent:[265]

> Cognitive linguists stress that a hallmark of metaphor is its cognitive asymmetry or directionality […] This means that metaphorical mappings between dissimilar concepts tend to go in the direction of a concrete source concept to a relatively more abstract target concept, but not the other way around.[266]

This explains why, for example: 'people conventionally talk about morality in terms of cleanliness ("wash away my sins") but do not talk about cleanliness in terms of morality ("make this refrigerator holy").'[267] How then can the abstract referent of 'blindness/deafness' slide into becoming the supposedly more concrete signifier of 'sensory impaired people in the real world'? Although Landau et al. acknowledge there are some exceptions to this typical asymmetry of direction, this would appear to be a problematising factor.

However, as I hope now to show, addressing this anomaly elucidates an important and hitherto unclear aspect of my argument: that the disabling abstraction of a conceptual 'blindness' or 'deafness' is in fact more concretely 'real' to most of us (including, perversely, many of us with such impairments) than the actual phenomenological experience of real blind and deaf people. Rodas and Mitchell and Snyder, among others, have suggested that this is a result of the overwhelming torrent of disabling metaphors in literature and popular reference.[268] Harking back to Bauman's call for a reader-response

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[264] Landau et al., p. 1059.
[265] Ibid, p. 1060.
[266] Ibid, Footnote 1, p. 1080.
[267] Ibid, p. 1061.
[268] This is discussed in sections 1.4.1 (Mitchell and Snyder) and 1.5.3 (Rodas).

approach, I would like to consider the phenomenology of this constant repetition of metaphors using blindness and deafness to signify existential states. By understanding language in terms of its active constitution of the world around us — as 'the body, flesh and bone of meaning' — we can conceive of it in all its forms, Signed, spoken, written, as 'taking on a phenomenal, embodied presence of its own'.[269] As Bauman shows, once recognised in Sign, this can be applied across all linguistic modalities. He instances Clayton Valli's Sign poem 'Dew on Spiderweb', in which an audience 'may witness the linguistic spinning of a spiderweb as real as any spiderweb seen before'.[270] The image that Valli creates 'does not so much iconically *refer* to a spiderweb "out-there"' as bring a linguistic spiderweb 'into being'.[271] Over the rest of this section, I shall consider the metaphoric concepts of 'blindness/deafness' in speech and written language in the same way: not as referents to a real world object (blind/deaf people) but as bringing a 'linguistic image' of them into being.

Brought together, Bauman's phenomenological view of language, in all its modalities, as an embodied process of meaning 'brought into being' within the mind; and his insistence that taking Sign into account will open up new perspectives in the study of language as a whole, provides a philosophical basis for a group of studies currently being undertaken in the field of psycholinguistics. Here, 'embodied language' has a neurological substrate, whereby sensory and motor processes in the brain are triggered by linguistic events, forming an essential part of the production of mental 'meaning'. Applying research into Sign to other studies covering spoken language, Pamela Perniss and Gabriella Vigliocco argue the case for linguistic iconicity, across both modalities, as the mechanism by which this embodiment takes place.[272] They contend that iconicity is a 'fundamental adaptation' of language in both Signed and spoken forms, and that it is key to the understanding of language evolution, language development in children and language processing in the brain.[273]

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[269] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 326.
[270] Clayton Valli, 'Dew on Spiderweb', performed by Ella Mae Lentz, 1995, in *ASL Poetry: Selected Works of Clayton Valli* (San Diego: DawnSignPress, 2009). [on DVD].
[271] Bauman, 'Towards', p. 326.
[272] Pamela Perniss and Gabriella Vigliocco, 'The Bridge of Iconicity: from a World of Experience to the Experience of Language', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 2014, B 369: 20130300 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2013.0300> [accessed 14 October 2015]
[273] Ibid, n.pag, section 2.

Face-to-face speech, as Perniss and Vigliocco demonstrate, contains physical iconic elements that are crucial to the production of meaning (facial expression, gesture and vocal modulation) as well as sound-symbolic mappings between sounds and the properties of their referents. Likewise, Sign contains similar iconic features of facial expression and body language, in addition to the more commonly recognised iconicity of the signs themselves. Signs have varying degrees of iconicity: they may be directly imitative (as with PUSH, which is almost the same movement as the action itself) or more abstracted (as with TREE, which maps a stylised tree upon the hand).[274] Perniss and Vigliocco suggest that during childhood language development, iconicity serves a 'scaffolding' purpose, in that the more directly imitative iconic mappings 'provide the initial point of contact between linguistic form and sensori-motor experience' but that once learned, the level of abstraction makes no difference to performance for adult Signers: highly abstracted Signs are as instantly recognised and responded to as more directly imitative ones.[275]

Having laid out this understanding of the function of iconicity in Sign, Perniss and Vigliocco apply it to the emerging awareness of iconicity in speech and propose this as the mechanism by which embodiment occurs. 'Embodiment' here refers to the research-driven theory that 'language involves engaging in *simulations* of corresponding sensori-motor experience', a process which is 'core to meaningful communication'.[276] Here, they pause to speculate that the understanding of language as 'embodied' (rather than being a purely mind-based activity) might have gained acceptance much earlier than has been the case if studies had begun by taking into account Sign, with its immediately obvious iconicity, rather than exclusively considering spoken language, where the iconicity is more easily overlooked.[277]

Outlining iconicity as the potential mechanism by which embodiment operates, Perniss and Vigliocco describe the process of constituting meaning in terms very similar to Bauman's 'bringing into being': as 'making a (previous) event present':

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[274] Perniss and Vigliocco are referring to British Sign Language in these two examples. They note, importantly for understanding the difference between Sign and gesture, that in Sign: 'all iconic signs, even the transparent ones, are conventionalized, a property that sets iconic signs apart from pantomimes and iconic gestures', n.pag, section 1(a).
[275] Ibid, n. pag, section 1(a).
[276] Ibid, n.pag, section 4 and abstract.
[277] Ibid, n.pag, section 3(a).

iconicity is imitative of something that is not there, to evoke some 'trace' of a previous experience and to thereby make the event present in a sense. In this lies a seed of conceptual reference, with iconicity bridging between a referent in the world and a representation in the mind, and thereby achieving displaced reference.[278]

Reaching this conclusion via an independent and empirically grounded method that has as its implicit philosophical basis Bauman's recommendation of approaching Sign and speech as different modalities of a common linguistic process rather than as binarised opposites, Perniss and Vigliocco acknowledge that it sets up a radically different conception of what language is:

An embodied view of language stands in contrast to traditional views of language as a system of abstract symbol manipulation, which is separate from other aspects of perception, action and cognition. Iconicity makes links between linguistic/communicative forms and perception and action immediately clear.[279]

Having outlined Perniss and Vigliocco's paradigm-shifting perspective on language as embodied (grounded in sensory-motor processes) via the mechanism of iconicity, I now suggest that it can be usefully applied to Ponzio's 'automatic practice', in order to inform a better understanding of how the repetition of 'blindness/deafness' metaphors causes a 'collapse' into seemingly literal representation. In doing so, I am using Peirce's (and Bauman's and Ponzio's, among others) semiotic identification of metaphor as a feature of verbal iconicity; and am thereby contending that there is a rationale for believing that the use of metaphoric word-images may, like the physical types of linguistic iconicity that Perniss and Vigliocco identify (such as facial expression, gesture and voice modulations) also operate through the iconicity mechanism of triggering the sensory-motor neural pathways that help to constitute meaning. Metaphoric word-images can thus be understood as a more abstracted version of iconicity, in analogy with highly stylised Signs (which, once learned, are as instantly apprehended and responded to as more directly imitative forms of iconicity). Should this proposed theorisation prove justified, then this not only goes a considerable way towards explaining the difficulty of challenging — or even recognising — the deeply embedded cultural 'meanings' of blindness and deafness, but also casts new light on ways of challenging them.

I am not forestalling empirical cognitive research with this conceptual model. As Perniss and Vigliocco declare, such research is required: 'few studies

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[278] Ibid, n. pag, section 2.
[279] Ibid, n. pag, section 4.

have endeavored to identify the explicit mechanisms that underscore the coupling between language processing and sensori-motor processing'. Part of the reason for this gap in research, they assert, is a paucity of theorisation:

> One reason for the lack of such studies may well be that, assuming arbitrary links between linguistic form and meaning, researchers more or less implicitly assume that such coupling must be realized during language development as a Hebbian type of association.[280]

My approach, then, is intended as a contribution to the theoretical framework required for undertaking such research. Moreover, widening Perniss and Vigliocco's conception of iconic features of language to include the verbal iconicity of metaphor, and applying this to the social cognition model of 'metaphoric transfer effects' that Landau et al. have espoused, provides a way of understanding the problem of the 'metaphor read in reverse'. Earlier, I concluded that for Landau et al.'s 'metaphoric transfer strategy' to hold, whereby selected attributes of the more concrete signifier are conferred upon the more abstract signifier, then, as other disability studies theorists have asserted, the disabling concept of 'blindness/deafness' (honed to represent tragedy/insight/helplessness etc.) must be more concretely 'real' in people's minds than the phenomenological experience of blind and deaf people — even, perversely, for people who themselves have sensory losses. I suggest now that Perniss and Vigliocco's study offers a potential neurobiological explanation for this seemingly contradictory situation through its description of the mechanism of iconicity. By this mechanism, a perceived likeness between otherwise dissimilar things triggers sensory-motor neural processing that physically constitutes negatively-charged meaning in the brain-body dyad. Thus, the ingrained, embodied 'meaning' of tragedy/insight/helplessness/isolation is called into play as a physical response to the concept of 'blindness' or 'deafness' and their less-concrete-seeming indexical referents: blind and deaf people.

There is an analogy here, I believe, with the situation of disability 'simulations'. Intended as a way of improving disability awareness amongst the

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[280] Ibid, n.pag, section 4. 'Hebbian learning' refers to the neuropsychological theory introduced by Donald Hebb in *The Organization of Behavior* (New York: Wiley, 1949). This proposes that neural cell 'assemblies' are created by repeated incidences of particular patterns of neural cells firing in close association. For a discussion of the influence of Hebb's theory on modern neuroscience, see Richard E. Brown and Peter M. Milner, 'The legacy of Donald O. Hebb: more than the Hebb Synapse', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 4, 12 (2003), 1013–19. Perniss and Vigliocco are proposing iconicity as a mechanism that either adds to or replaces Hebb's mechanism of correlation in forming such associations.

general public, these involve temporarily disabling participants so that they experience for themselves difficulties that disabled people face. Blindness is a popular choice, because it is easy to implement by blindfolding participants. Ben-Moshe sees a strong similarity between such simulations and Saramago's presentation of blindness as 'disorientation, chaos, and lack of familiarity with space and time'.[281] Despite the wide usage of such 'sensitivity' training, there has been considerable criticism from disabled people, as Ben-Moshe notes: 'These exercises are highly problematic and have been criticized extensively within the disability community.'[282] Toby Olson, speaking as executive director of the Washington State Governor's Committee on Disability and Employment, and as a person with a neurological disorder affecting his sight and hearing, is one such critic: 'The fear is that simulations actually reinforce the inaccurate negative stereotypes that often limit opportunities for people with disabilities in education and employment.'[283] Olson explains that 'without any of the coping skills and techniques people with disabilities create and master throughout their lives', the experience that participants in such studies gain is not what it is like to be a typical disabled person but rather 'the experience of being the single most hapless, incompetent individual with that particular disability on the face of the planet'.[284]

Olson's opinion is supported by a set of evaluative experiments carried out by Arielle Silverman, Jason Gwinn and Leaf Van Boven, in which they compared the attitudes of participants after blindness simulations. Intended to test the hypothesis that such simulations increase sympathy towards blind people but simultaneously reduce participants' judgment of blind people's capabilities, these involved four groups of participants. First: 'simulators', who carried out everyday tasks while blindfolded; such as navigating an indoor route, filling a glass of water, sorting coins and writing on a chalkboard. Secondly, 'vicarious simulators', who watched video recordings of the simulators doing this. Thirdly, 'knowledge-simulators', who heard descriptions of what happened during the simulations. And, fourthly: a control group of non-simulators, who carried out

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[281] Ben-Moshe, n.pag.
[282] Ibid, n.pag.
[283] Toby Olson, 'How Disability Simulations Promote Damaging Stereotypes', *National Federation of the Blind Braille Monitor,* ed. by Gary Wunder, 57, 1 (Jan. 2014).
<https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/bm/bm14/bm1401/bm140107.htm>
[accessed 27 February 2016]
[284] Ibid, n.pag.

the activities without blindfolds and were unaware of the blindness simulation. The results showed that after the simulation, the simulators who had carried out tasks while blindfolded had warmer feelings towards blind people than did the other three groups (who did not differ from each other). However, the simulation participants also made significantly lower judgments of blind people's capabilities and predicted that they themselves would be less capable if blinded and would adapt to blindness more slowly than did the other three groups, who again did not significantly differ from each other.

The crucial element of this, for the purpose of my analogy with the process of the 'collapsed' metaphor, is that direct participation in the simulation had a significant (negative) attitudinal effect that was not produced by either observation ('vicarious simulation') or explanation ('simulation knowledge'). It seems that the sensory-motor experience of physically carrying out the activities triggers a deeper emotional response than does observation or knowledge. The conclusions drawn by Silverman et al. support this:

> Like attitudes toward other people generally, attitudes toward the disabled are highly self-referencing, shaped by people's imagined or simulated experience of being personally disabled […]. Such experiences help people form richer, deeper, and more vivid mental representations of evocative states (such as disabilities) through several mechanisms, including increased cognitive elaboration, emotional arousal, and imaginative ease […]. These mechanisms combine to emphasize the negative aspects of initial disability. Future research could be useful in isolating the mechanisms through which personal experience with disability influences judgments of disabled people.[285]

I suggest that such future research into the mechanisms whereby personal experience influences judgment might usefully consider the work being carried out within the fields of psycholinguistics and social cognition. As earlier discussed, Perniss and Vigliocco propose an 'iconicity mechanism' within linguistic use (across all modalities) which grounds ('embodies') language in sensory-motor processing that contributes to constitution of meaning. I linked this work with Landau et al.'s work on metaphoric cognition, which showed how the metaphoric use of language affects 'how social information is attended to, recalled, interpreted, and used to make judgments', thus supporting the claim that 'metaphors shape how people conceptualize — and not merely talk about —

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[285] Arielle M. Silverman, Jason D. Gwinn, and Leaf Van Boven, '"Stumbling in Their Shoes": Disability Simulations Reduce Judged Capabilities of Disabled People', *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6, 4 (2015), 464–71, p. 469.

multiple aspects of the social world'.[286] Put together with Silverman et al.'s experiment, this suggests two important things. First, that personal sensory-motor experience is of critical importance when it comes to the formation of social attitudes. Second, that such bodily experience can come through action (as in disability simulations) or through linguistic iconicity, including metaphor, which triggers sensory-motor activity that forms part of the constitution of meaning. Both Silverman et al. and Landau et al. have stressed the personal and experiential nature of this sensory-motor process. Thus, I suggest that people judge and feel about blind or deaf people (who are Others as well as others) in ways that are constituted from their own personal experience of 'blindness' and 'deafness'. This personal experience may be action-based (drawn from experience they judge similar, such as being in the dark or unable to understand someone or be understood) or metaphor-based (which, as the combination of Landau et al. and Perniss and Vigliocco have shown, is experiential in a way that other language forms are not). Both forms of personal experience are equally misleading. As Silverman et al. and Olson point out, temporary disablement contains none of the adaptation that disabled people achieve, and, as Jernigan's and Panara's categorisations and other disability studies analyses indicate, the literary and everyday linguistic conceptions of 'blindness' and 'deafness' are artificial constructs honed specifically to express existential concerns (tragedy/isolation/helplessness etc.). Grounded into our sensory-motor processes, this results in a distorted and prejudicial conception of blind and deaf people, which is hard to challenge. I suggest, therefore, that the field of enquiry encompassed by disability studies must endeavour to found its ontology of disability upon a better appreciation of its epistemology: *how* we understand disability is a determining factor in *what* we understand it to be.

## 1.5 Concatenating the categories: a synthesised and hierarchised scheme

Challenge must take place, if blind and deaf people are to escape the oppression that social attitudes place upon them. Silverman et al. and Olson agree that a pragmatic approach is required: effectively replacing people's negatively-embodied conceptions of blindness and deafness with experientially positive ones. Olson suggests that 'we all recruit, hire, and work alongside people who have disabilities', thus 'allowing us to discover what people who

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[286] Landau et al., p. 1058.

have so much experience devising innovative, practical solutions to unusual problems can add to our organizations' strengths'.[287] Silverman et al. suggest that disability simulations could be improved if they were to focus less on the challenges of *becoming* disabled and more on trying to 'provide people with successful adaptation experiences' and creating 'opportunities for participants to observe how disabled individuals perform tasks competently', thus leading participants 'to anticipate that being disabled is challenging, yet adaptable'.[288]

As well as creating new attitudes, it is important to confront old ones. Amy Vidali has called for a 'disability approach to metaphor' which engages with traditional theories of metaphor in ways that include disabled experience rather than presenting it as 'disorder' to the implicitly 'normal' able-bodied experience.[289] She expands on this:

> A disability approach to metaphor attends to how diverse bodies impact metaphor acquisition and use, which shifts disability away from something only 'used' or 'represented' by metaphor. Instead, disability interprets, challenges, and articulates metaphors. A disability approach to metaphor must engage the full range of disability; resist the desire to simply 'police' or remove disability metaphors; actively transgress disability metaphors by employing a diverse vocabulary; and artistically create and historically reinterpret metaphors of disability.[290]

In this thesis so far, I have both reinterpreted metaphors of blindness and deafness; and formulated a philosophical framework within which further research across multiple disciplines might combine to articulate the factors impacting the acquisition and use of metaphors of sensory loss. I shall now put both these elements of a 'disability approach' together in order to propose a revised categorisation of Panara's and Jernigan's classifications of blindness and deafness in fiction: one which is based on an understanding of metaphor as actively constituting social attitudes.

## 1.5.1 Framing the synthesis

The analysis thus far has shown that, as Davis asserts, the representation of sensory loss is not about actual blindness or deafness, and that unpicking this calls into question 'our assumptions about writing, about language, about

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[287] Olson, n.pag.
[288] Silverman et al., p. 469.
[289] Amy Vidali, 'Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, 4, 1 (2010), 33–54, p. 35.
[290] Ibid, p. 42.

communication'.[291] So far, I have provided a fuller, sociopolitically-oriented and multidisciplinary understanding of how sensory loss is figured both in literature and in life; and of the complex relationship between the two. Now I apply that understanding to Panara's and Jernigan's initial classifications of deafness and blindness in literature (or rather, since these are such artificial constructs, 'deafness' and 'blindness'), with the aim of synthesising them into a contextualised concatenation.

Jernigan believed that his categories reflected a 'bewildering variety': 'often conflicting and contradictory, not only as between different ages or cultures, or among the works of various writers, but even within the pages of a single book.'[292] Panara, though he applies a loose historical theme, also seems daunted by the task of ordering characterisations that 'run the whole gamut of literary creations'.[293] There are flaws in their schemes: the categories are unequal in scope; they overlap, leave gaps and do not adequately theorise or fully substantiate their claims. In particular, there is an insufficiently interrogated double-faced pattern linking categories. Many can be paired into positive and negative versions of a single mindset: blindness as wickedness/virtue or as punishment/purification; deafness as terrible isolation/blissful solitude. Thus, warm sympathy produces an idealised virtuous blind person, while harsh judgment upturns this into lack of moral capacity. Both figurations depend more on the attitude of the person conceiving the response than on the characteristics of the blind person supposedly inspiring it. This focus on attitudes rather than on characteristics is not reflected in Panara's and Jernigan's schema. Nevertheless, their work on exposing what has been — and for the most extent still is — a thoroughly obscured subject, was revolutionary, and their achievement should be acknowledged and appreciated.

As the previous section aimed to show, responses to sensory loss are governed by a complex and neurobiologically governed interaction at the nexus between language, literature and social behaviour. Building on this analysis, I propose that it is misleading to typify the 'bewildering array' or 'gamut' of deaf and blind representations in literature in terms of their own characteristics. This is to repeat the medicalised model of individual deficit that the disability movement of the 1970s rose up against. Instead, I shall take a sociological

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[291] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, p 100.
[292] Jernigan, p. 1.
[293] Panara, p. 3.

perspective; considering them as manifestations of underlying attitudes towards deafness and blindness, which can and should be challenged at their source of production. Taken together, the tropes identified by Panara and Jernigan reveal that sensory loss is an Othering process, which re-contextualises blind or deaf people to such an extent that their individuality or personhood is removed. Their actions and thoughts are constrained by the extrinsic fact of their sensory losses; so much so that they can have no intrinsic meaning as individuals. All personal meaning swamped, blind and deaf people thus become the object of moral judgment; they are denied personal agency; they are objectified in order to mirror a distorted reflection of 'normality' that shores up cultural values. I will use this attitudinal viewpoint to set Panara's and Jernigan's separate classifications in context with each other; producing a hierarchised and synthesised concatenation.

I will give an overview of how Panara's and Jernigan's classifications map to these four attitudinal perspectives, before moving on to discuss each in detail. First, I combine Jernigan's categorisation of blindness as either 'miraculous or compensatory power' or 'total tragedy'; and Panara's figurations of deafness as 'tormented isolation' or 'blissful solitude'. Both pairings reflect a swamping of personal meaning. The weighty existential issues at stake, whether given positive or negative valences, overwhelm all other elements of blind or deaf people's existence, reducing them to the embodiment of an abstract idea about humanity.

Secondly, two more sets of oppositional pairings can be put together from Jernigan's categories of representations of blindness as either 'unrelieved wickedness and evil' or 'perfect virtue'; and as either 'punishment for sin' or 'purification' from sin. These all situate the blind or deaf person as the object of moral judgement. Jernigan's category of 'perfect virtue' has an analogy in Panara's class of the deaf 'accepted with humanitarian spirit': the identification of the 'deserving disabled' calls for moralising evaluation.  Similarly, the trope identified by Jernigan that associates blindness with 'foolishness or helplessness' (whether presented in a kindly or mocking light) also reduces the experience of sensory loss in an unhelpful environment to a greater or lesser ethical success in reaching a standard of capability that is set and judged by those without such impairments. The opportunity for an ordinary level of human moral complexity and engagement is removed; blind and deaf people receive an ethical designation grounded in a single physical fact.

Thirdly, I put Panara's class of deaf people shown as 'freaks, grotesques and distortions of reality' together with Jernigan's of blindness as 'abnormality or dehumanisation'. Both stem from an attitude that denies the deaf or blind person respect and agency. This predicates people with sensory loss as either incapable or unworthy of self-management and personal decision-making, and therefore allows them to be 'rightfully' stripped of the right to exercise control over their lives.

Fourth, and finally, the two categories of blindness as 'symbol or parable' and deafness as 'evidence of man's inhumanity to man' both distort people with sensory losses into a symbolic mirror; whereby their primary significance is to reflect some intended message about 'normality'.

Having thus resolved fourteen of Panara's and Jernigan's fifteen categories into four attitudinal perspectives, I will point out that the fifteenth, Panara's category of the deaf as 'melodramatic plot devices for humour, mystery or intrigue', as discussed in section 1.4.1, is an evocation of Mitchell and Snyder's 'stock characterisation', whereby disability is added as a shallowly-conceived identifier to make a character memorable. I suggest, therefore, that this exemplifies the overarching effect towards which all four attitudinal aspects contribute: the negation of the disabled self. The complex phenomenological experience of blindness or deafness is considered of such little importance or interest when not attached to larger literary themes, that the impairments can be tagged on to a character like a colourful shirt to catch the fickle reader's attention.

**1.5.2 Concatenating the categories**

Figure 1.5.2: Concatenating the categories of sensory loss representation

| ORIGINAL CATEGORIES OF REPRESENTATION | CONCATENATION INTO ATTITUDINAL ASPECTS | OVERARCHING EFFECT |
|---|---|---|
| Blindness as miracle: divine compensatory power | Swamping personal meaning | Negation of the disabled self |
| Blindness as total tragedy | | |
| The deaf tormented by isolation | | |
| Deafness as blissful solitude | | |
| Blindness as unrelieved wickedness and evil | Objectifying by moral judgment | |
| Blindness as perfect virtue | | |
| The deaf accepted with humanitarian spirit and sentiment | | |
| Blindness as punishment for sin | | |
| Blindness as purification | | |
| Blindness as foolishness or helplessness | | |
| Blindness as abnormality or dehumanisation | Denying agency and respect | |
| The deaf as freaks, grotesques and distortions of reality | | |
| Blindness as symbol or parable | Distorting into mirrored 'normalcy' | |
| Deafness as evidence of man's inhumanity to man | | |
| The deaf as melodramatic plot devices for humour, mystery or intrigue | | |

### 1.5.3 Swamping personal meaning

Blindness and deafness are used to figure the big issues of existence. Blindness is tragedy or compensatory miracle. Deafness is the torment of isolation or blissful solitude. Each pair of figurations is in fact a single one given negative and positive charge. With negative valence, as tragedy and isolation, the metaphor makes an existential fear concrete. In its positive form, it provides a coping mechanism. Either way, the person who is caught up in the metaphor by reason of exhibiting a sensory loss has no significance. Their personal meaning is swamped by the relentless tide of existential angst.

David Bolt has collected several examples of what he calls 'Beneficial Blindness'; the construct of extraordinary mental or sensory powers imaginatively and unrealistically conferred upon the blind.[294] One example he draws on, described by the newly-blinded narrator of James Kelman's *How Late it Was How Late*, also provides a neat example of Landau et al.'s metaphor-shaping-thought in action: in this case 'blind as a bat'. Primed by his musings about bats — 'they have this incredible sense of hearing, it's sonic or somefuckingthing like they've developed *their* own radar, compensating the blindness', he then dredges up memories of a 'blind guy' who 'could actually pick up what was going on in a different room, whereabouts people were standing and all that […] like he had developed some sort of different sense-organ all the gether.'[295]

Many of Bolt's other examples reveal a deep uneasiness within the texts about the compensatory powers they bestow upon the blind. In Wells's *The Country of the Blind,* a congenitally blind race, cut-off from contact with the rest of the world, has evolved impressive but also animalistic and non-human capabilities in compensation for their lack of sight:

> It was marvellous with what confidence and precision they went about […] they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away […]. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine: they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can.[296]

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[294] David Bolt, 'Beneficial Blindness: Literary Representation and the So-Called Positive Stereotyping of People with Impaired Vision', *New Zealand Journal of Disability Studies*, 12 (2006), 80–100.

[295] James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp 100–01.

[296] 'The Country of the Blind', p. 553.

The extraordinary mobility of Wells's blind race is matched by Margaret Atwood's eponymous blind assassin, who can also navigate his surroundings better than any sighted person:

> He knows the Temple inside out, by touch and smell; it's his business to know such things. He knows the city in the same way, he can run it like a rat in a maze […]. Now he pushes on a marble panel […] and they're in darkness. He knows this by the way the girl stumbles, and it occurs to him for the first time that by taking her with him he'll be slowed down. He'll be hampered by her ability to see.[297]

There is an ominous quality to both Wells's and Atwood's blind characters: their remarkable capabilities give them a dangerous edge. In Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, this uneasiness tips into outright revulsion. The all-but-supernatural ability of the old beggar, Blind Pew, to compensate for his blindness is part of the horror that surrounds him. Frightening Jim with threats, he warns, 'If I can't see, I can hear a finger stirring', before skipping out of the room 'with incredible accuracy and nimbleness'.[298]

Evincing a similar repulsion in the reader, although not included in Bolt's listing, is the blind beggar in *Madame Bovary* (1857). Quayson has noted the 'explicit link' established in the nineteenth century between syphilis and blindness: 'to the degree that an immediate correlation was made between blindness and sexual behaviour. Blindness was taken as a sign of presumed sexually questionable behaviour and moral deficiency.'[299] Writing on the literary tradition of blind prophets, Davis points out how 'Flaubert perverts the tradition by giving a blind syphilitic beggar the final word that leads to Emma's anti-beatific insight at the horrifying end of her life'.[300] As Emma Bovary's drawn-out death reaches its last agonising moments, the beggar clatters past her window, raucously singing. Emma has heard the ditty — about maids in love — before, but only the parts that were 'all about birds, sunlight, and greenery'.[301] Now, with 'a ghastly, frenzied, despairing laugh, believing she could see the wretch's hideous face like a symbol of ultimate terror, looming through the dark shadows of eternity', she hears its bawdy conclusion.[302] No romantic heroine after all, the girl in the grass has lost her petticoat, suggesting sexual looseness. The parallel

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[297] Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009) p. 267.
[298] *Treasure Island*, p. 22.
[299] Quayson, p.9.
[300] Davis. *Enforcing Normalcy*, p. 104.
[301] Gustave Flaubert. *Madame Bovary*, trans. by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 223.
[302] Ibid, p. 286.

with Emma's own life is clear, her own moral 'blindness' exposed, and the true hideous, wretched nature of her life damns her at the last.

Analysing this 'myth of the moral blindness of the sighted', Naomi Schor traces historical retellings of the Beauty and the Beast fable and shows how Victor Hugo and Mary Shelley each depend upon the trope of 'the moral superiority of the physically blind over the sighted'.[303] Like Rodas, Schor notes how metaphor is embedded into common parlance. Taking the phrase 'love is blind', she suggests that:

> there is another way to understand blindness in love, and that is to understand that blindness sets one free, that blindness to the other's physical appearance and gestural language is precisely what enables the lover to see — rather to hear, because what is at stake here is a massive repudiation of the supremacy of vision — the lover's true soul.[304]

Applying this understanding to Victor Hugo's novel *L'Homme qui rit*, Schor concludes that in finding the grotesquely mutilated Gwynplaine a mate: 'Hugo's genius consists in his rendering of the relationship between Beauty and the Beast as the pairing not just of an animal-like male and a refined female beauty but of a male monster with a *blind* female beauty, Déa'.[305] Despite her blindness, or rather because of it, Déa can see payst Gwynplaine's disfigurement: 'Only one woman on earth saw Gwynplaine. It was the blind girl.'[306] Her supernatural sight goes deeper than ordinary vision: 'Where the multitude saw the monster, Déa recognized the archangel. For Déa, being blind, perceived his soul.'[307] Ursus, their philosopher-protector, reinforces this when he tells them '"Conscience is vision"'; and when Gwynplaine confesses his monstrous ugliness to his beloved, Déa tells him that other people are wrong, blinded by their shallow power of sight: '"To be ugly, what is it? It is to do wrong. Gwynplaine only does good. He is handsome. […] To see — what is that you call seeing? For my own part, I cannot see; I know. It seems that to see means to hide. […] To see, is a thing that conceals the true."'[308]

Schor goes on to identify a similar twinning of vision/moral blindness in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), although this time the idealised blind figure does not play a romantic role. After months of hiding and spying upon the kindly

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[303] Naomi Schor, 'Blindness as Metaphor', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 11, 2 (1999), 76–105, p. 92.
[304] Ibid, p. 84.
[305] Ibid, p. 87.
[306] *The Man Who Laughs*, I, p. 375.
[307] Ibid, p. 377.
[308] Ibid, pp. 378, 396.

De Lacey family, the Monster screws up the courage to enter their cottage and beg their protection. He has chosen his moment carefully: 'I revolved many projects; but that on which I fixed was, to enter the dwelling when the blind man should be alone. I had sagacity enough to discover that the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me.'[309] Not daring to reveal his entire situation, he tries to explain to the blind man that others have a faulty impression of him: '"a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster."'[310] Like Déa in Hugo's novel, De Lacey is not 'blinded' by mere vision, he can hear truth: '"I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere."'[311] Sadly, the blind man's children return: horrified by what they see, they do not stop to listen as their father does but drive the Monster out. They, fully sighted, apprehend less than their blind father.

Yet, were all these blind characters, good and bad, to be stripped of the powers that are bound up within their lack of vision; were they to lose their truer judgment, clearer perception and exceptional mobility, then what is left? If there is no compensation, must there only be lack? The obverse to the theme of compensation is that of total loss; blindness as total tragedy, leading to devastation and even death. Blindness is often presented as the very kernel of tragedy: the most extreme evocation of a tragic outcome. This image is so pervasive that it is hard to recognise as a trope, as Rodas points out:

> That blindness holds its victims in thrall, that it extinguishes their light, their capabilities, their possibilities; that blindness is darkness, imprisonment, death; these are inescapable associations. Not, of course, that these notions are necessarily true, but their existence, the way they pervade our culture and our discourse, describes our primary belief, the starting point of our vision of blindness. Blind men, we are taught to believe, live in darkness, in a pit, a prison, a tomb, set apart from light and from the seeing world.[312]

Noting Diderot's claim that imprisonment is no threat to a blind man, since he already lives in a 'dungeon' from which death can only be a release,[313] Rodas goes on to draw attention to the figure of entombment in Baudelaire's 'endless

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[309] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 134.
[310] Ibid, p. 136.
[311] Ibid, p. 136.
[312] Rodas. p. 127.
[313] Denis Diderot, 'Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See', *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, ed. and trans. by Margaret Jourdain (London: Open Court, 1916), pp. 68–225, pp. 77–78.

black abyss',[314] Thomas Hardy's 'eternal dark',[315] and Elizabeth Barrett's 'rayless companionless Dark'.[316] Moving from poetry to prose, she identifies the heroine of Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch,* with her 'blind horror of dark shades',[317] and American deafblind prodigy Laura Bridgman, as portrayed by Charles Dickens: 'in a marble cell, impervious to any ray of light, or particle of sound; with her poor white hand peeping through a chink in the wall, beckoning to some good man for help'.[318]

As a bulwark against this lethal tide, Rodas turns to Jorge Luis Borges, whose personal experience of sight loss showed him that blindness and darkness are not equivalent — or only in the imagination of the sighted:

> People generally imagine the blind as enclosed in a black world. There is, for example, Shakespeare's line: 'Looking on darkness which the blind do see.'[319] If we understand *darkness* as *blackness,* then Shakespeare is wrong. […] The world of the blind is not the night that people imagine. […] The blind live in a world that is inconvenient, an undefined world from which certain colours emerge: for me, yellow, blue (except that the blue may be green), and green (except that the green may be blue).[320]

Yet, as Rodas shows, despite this personal experience Borges 'cannot abandon the language that has always constructed our sense of blindness'.[321] Even whilst describing his own blindness as 'vaguely luminous', he 'continues to rely on the metaphor that has been prepared for him' when he speaks of the 'slow nightfall' of his sight loss and his 'darkened eyes'.[322] As Rodas concludes: 'even the most sophisticated thinkers rely on the notion that blindness and darkness are inextricably intertwined'.[323] The metaphor of blindness as deathly darkness is so

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[314] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Blind', trans. by Thomas Sturge Moore, in *Baudelaire in English*, ed. by Carol Clark and Robert Sykes (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 129.
[315] Thomas Hardy, 'The Blinded Bird', in *Selected Poems* (New York: MacMillan, 1953), p. 446.
[316] Philip Kelley, Ronald Hudson and Scott Lewis, eds, *The Browning Correspondence*, 23 vols (40 projected) (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 1984—), XIII (1995), p. 263.
[317] Wilkie Collins, *Poor Miss Finch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 74.
[318] Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, ed. by Angus Calder (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), p. 81.
[319] William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 27', in *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden, 2010), p. 164.
[320] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Blindness', trans. by Eliot Weinberger, in *Selected Non-Fictions,* ed. by Eliot Weinberger (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 473–83, p. 472.
[321] Rodas. p. 128.
[322] Rodas, p. 128; Borges, pp. 472, 474.
[323] Rodas. p. 128.

entrenched that it has overtaken lived experience. It is, as Ved Mehta has suggested, the corollary of the myth of insight: 'the sighted go from one extreme to the other — from assuming that the blind are virtually cut off from all perception to endowing them with extrasensory perception.'[324] Linett offers an explanation. Since the sighted wrongly assume 'that knowledge comes primarily from sight: when blind people possess knowledge, sighted people assume they have come by it through uncanny means'.[325]

Turning from blindness to deafness, Linett goes on to postulate that, just as blindness is figured as a lack of knowledge, deafness is positioned 'in a parallel way, along an axis of communication'.[326] This ties in with Davis's conclusion, as discussed in section 1.4.3, that 'blindness has been adopted by Western culture as a metaphor for insight, while deafness has been a signifier for the absence of language'.[327] Without such insight, or as a result of turning inward towards it, blindness becomes a tragic death-in-life, whereas deafness becomes either a fantasised seclusion or a walling off from life. Trenton Batson and Eugene Bergman have structured their reading of the deafness/isolation trope in terms of a historical shift. They posit that nineteenth-century deaf characters are victims of individual isolation, which manifests either as untainted purity or as terrible oppression. In the twentieth century, however, isolation becomes a condition 'more typical than peculiar': 'twentieth-century man, alienated and isolated in a non-human world, is the archetypal deaf man.'[328] Batson and Bergman's analysis ties into Panara's assertion that twentieth-century writers have used deafness to symbolise 'the deepening well of loneliness that exists in the soul of modern man, and his gradual withdrawal and alienation from society'.[329]

I suggest that the theme of deaf characters as 'angels', which Batson and Bergman find in nineteenth-century works such as Dickens's *Doctor Marigold* and Alfred de Musset's *Pierre et Camille*, is an expression of the same

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[324] Ved Mehta. *All For Love: A Personal History of Desire and Disappointment* (London: Granta, 2001), p. 3

[325] Maren Linett, 'Blindness and Intimacy in Early Twentieth-Century Literature', *Mosaic,* 46, 3 (Sep. 2013), 27–42, p. 29.

[326] Ibid, p. 29.

[327] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, p. 106.

[328] Trenton W. Batson and Eugene Bergman, *Angels and Outcasts: An Anthology of Deaf Characters in Literature* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1985), p. 7.

[329] Panara, p. 5.

positively-charged valence of the isolation trope that produces Salinger's idealised deaf-mutes, as discussed in section 1.4.1. As Batson and Bergman comment:

> The deaf characters [...] are good, better than their hearing counterparts. Because they are outside of society, they have not imbibed of the evil within society, so are superior to their hearing counterparts. In general, they represent moral qualities that most people could not aspire to.[330]

Such figuration, including Dickens's example, is contained within Panara's category of 'the deaf accepted with humanitarian spirit and sentiment', which, in my attitudinal approach to classification, I have situated as 'becoming the object of moral judgment'. Thus, the works mentioned will be more fully discussed in the next section (1.5.4) of this thesis. However, I mention them here as an example of the way in which my categories, like Panara's and Jernigan's, necessarily overlap. The importance of recognising the web-like nature of the metaphoricisation of blindness and deafness can hardly be overstated. Slicing this up into classes and categories is a useful, even essential, tool for analysis, but it must always be acknowledged that these form part of an integral whole.

The negative valence of the 'deafness as isolation' metaphor is the more powerful one. Set against Dickens's and de Musset's angelic deaf heroines, set against Holden Caulfield's fantasy of deafness as blissful peace, or Buddy Glass's relief at unburdening himself into a benevolent, deaf void, is the negative side of the trope: a powerful, insistent theme of terrible loneliness and suppression. Batson and Bergman present 'Mumu' by Turgenev and 'The Deaf Mute' by de Maupassant as examples. Both stories emphasise the oppression of the peasant classes, and use a deaf man, Gargan in de Maupassant's case and Gerasim in Turgenev's, to provide 'symbolic value for their political and literary interests'.[331] Deafness, for both writers, is not just 'failing to hear', but also the greater powerlessness of 'failing to be heard by other people', so that Gargan and Gerasim represent the epitome of the 'misery of the masses': 'literally and figuratively without a voice, unable to speak out and convey the misery of their existence, or to change anything except by direct brutal action'.[332] Thus driven by a combination of political and symbolic factors — the absolute power of their masters and the individual powerlessness of being unable to hear or be heard — Gargan and Gerasim each kill their sole companion: in Gargan's case, his wife,

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[330] Batson and Bergman, p. 3.
[331] Ibid, p. 124.
[332] Ibid, p. 124.

and in Gerasim's, his dog. Alhough each escapes legal punishment (in Gerasim's case for subsequently running away from his landowner), they are both condemned to suffer the worse torment of a life in utter isolation, bereft of any form of love or fellowship.

De Maupassant's Gargan, 'a deaf-mute by birth', is the shepherd on the Picot family's farm.[333] A 'devout, upright' man of thirty, 'bearded like a patriarch', he becomes involved with a destitute fifteen-year-old orphan.[334] This girl, called 'Drops' because of her 'immoderate love for brandy', is a pitiful figure, willing to couple with 'the plowman or the stable-boy' for shelter.[335] No one knows how 'he who had never talked with anyone' communicates with this 'barn rover' but they become a couple.[336] The disapproving curate puts pressure on Madame Picot to make them marry. As a direct result, it becomes a game for Gargan's fellows to cuckold him:

> Before she was married, no one thought of sleeping with 'Drops,' but now each one wished his turn, for the sake of a laughable story. Everybody went there for a little glass behind the husband's back. […] For a half pint 'Drops' would finish the spectacle with no matter whom, in a ditch, behind a wall, anywhere, while the silhouette of the motionless Gargan could be seen knitting a stocking not a hundred feet from there, surrounded by his bleating flock.[337]

Finally, Gargan discovers 'Drops' in the act, with terrible consequences, 'the deaf-mute, with the cry of a beast, sprang at his wife's throat'.[338] The animal-like image is heightened by the brutal terseness with which the attack is described, 'her tongue was black, her eyes were coming out of her head, the blood was flowing from her nose. She was dead.'[339] A trial follows, during which the 'deaf-mute' 'reproduced the whole scene in pantomime', causing a 'tumultuous laugh' amongst the audience when he 'brusquely imitated the obscene movement of the criminal couple'.[340] This becomes a 'shiver of agony' as with 'frightful howls', 'the herdsman, with haggard eyes and moving his jaw and great beard as if he had bitten something, with arms extended and head thrown forward, repeated the terrible action of a murderer who strangles a being'.[341] He has to be

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[333] Ibid, p. 131.
[334] Ibid, p. 131.
[335] Ibid, p. 131.
[336] Ibid, p. 131.
[337] Ibid, p. 132.
[338] Ibid, p. 133.
[339] Ibid, p. 133.
[340] Ibid, p. 134.
[341] Ibid, p. 134.

restrained in court but is acquitted since he acted without forethought and from 'honor'.[342]

This painful drama is thrown into ironic relief by a framing device. The narrator is a leisurely Norman aristocrat who has heard Gargan's tale while on a shooting trip and is retelling it in a letter to amuse a Parisian friend. Thus, as soon the trial reaches its terrible climax, the story is abandoned and the narrator turns to chatter of woodcock and winter fashions. Gargan is left to his lonely fate, set apart by his deafness so that he is nothing more than an object of curiosity, as separate from his fellow peasants as they are from their masters.

Turgenev's story follows Gerasim; a 'fine peasant' strong enough to do the work of four, he is 'deaf and dumb' and therefore '[s]hut off by his affliction from the society of men'.[343] Uprooted from his farming village, he is taken to Moscow at the whim of his landowner, a miserly, elderly widow. His resulting bewilderment is as animal-like as Gargan's anger: he is 'like a wild beast in captivity'.[344] As with Gargan, he finds no fellowship: his fellow-servants call him 'dumb devil' or 'wood goblin'.[345] Again like Gargan, Gerasim is of a 'strict and serious disposition'[346] and, as in de Maupassant's story, the deaf man's inner emotions are presented as inexplicable. How and why he forms an attachment to the downtrodden maid-servant Tatyana, 'goodness only knows!'[347]

Unlike 'Drops' in de Maupassant's story, Tatyana is terrified by the deaf man's wordless grunts and rejects him. In any case, their mistress arbitrarily decides to bestow her upon another servant, a depraved drunkard called Kapiton. Afraid of Gerasim's reaction, the other servants make Tatyana pretend to be drunk in order to disgust him. On the evening that she and Kapiton leave Moscow, Gerasim rescues a drowning puppy, which becomes 'passionately attached' to him. Gerasim names her 'Mumu', one of his 'inarticulate noises'.[348] Trouble befalls when Mumu is summoned before the mistress. As terrified and bewildered as Gerasim himself has been, she bares her teeth and is summarily sold. When a distraught Gerasim searches for her the other servants only

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[342] Ibid, p. 134.
[343] Ibid, p. 86.
[344] Ibid, p. 87.
[345] Ibid, p. 91.
[346] Ibid, p. 87.
[347] Ibid, p. 90.
[348] Ibid, p. 102.

'grinned at him in reply'.[349] She escapes and Gerasim hides her but does not hear her barking. The other servants surround his room, giggling fearfully (in a manner reminiscent of the voyeuristic crowd at Gargan's trial). When the situation is at last explained to Gerasim by mime, he takes matters into his own hands, rowing Mumu out into the river:

> She looked at him trustingly and without fear and wagged her tail slightly. He turned away, shut his eyes and opened his hands. Gerasim heard nothing, neither the swift, shrill yelp of the falling dog, nor the heavy splash of the water; for him the noisy day was soundless and silent as no still night is silent to us'.[350]

Then he runs away, back to his native village, escaping unpunished thanks to the death of his elderly mistress. This is no triumph: he lives out his days 'a lonely bachelor in his lonely cottage', who 'will not even look at' another woman, 'nor does he keep a single dog.'[351]

Both these strong, dour men, with their inscrutable, brutish emotions, are constrained by a rigid morality that cannot be reasoned with. They are derided and tricked by the lowest of their fellows. The unusual strength that compensates for their deafness in terms of work capability only redirects the violence of the feudal system on to another pitiful chattel, wife or dog, and cannot prevent Gargan or Gerasim from being somehow sentenced by their deafness to a lifelong loneliness. As symbols of the powerlessness of the peasant classes, they must remain suspended in extreme isolation, accepting it as an ordained fate.

As both Panara and Batson and Bergman describe, in twentieth-century formulations of the isolation trope, deafness becomes a general tragedy of the 'modern' condition. This can be seen clearly in a later work than either of their critiques had the opportunity to cover: Madelyn Arnold's semi-autobiographical novel *Bird-Eyes* (1988). Set in 1964, the story is told by Latisha, a sixteen-year-old runaway committed to a psychiatric institution for 'incorrigible' behaviour (lesbianism and prostitution). There she meets Anna, a forty-year-old farmer's widow incarcerated supposedly for depression, but in fact as a result of her deafness. Concerned that she wasn't communicating with them after her husband's death, (even though, as Latisha says, 'it's not like she could have called them on the telephone'), her hearing children sought help from a doctor

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[349] Ibid, p. 107.
[350] Ibid, p. 117.
[351] Ibid, p. 121.

who, unable to communicate effectively with Anna, decided that she was in danger of committing suicide and committed her.[352] Anna is almost illiterate: her only form of communication is Sign, which the doctor forbids because it is not considered to be language at all, but 'animal-like: something out of caveman-throwback stories'.[353] Echoing the logocentric audism that section 1.4.3 saw Bauman critique, the doctor decides that 'words were the same thing as ideas, so she could not have a thought or even God. [...] Sign must have made her crazy by itself without the Word'.[354] Full of cruel ironies (the doctor is himself a non-native speaker whom others struggle to understand), the novel sets up an ominous mood around Anna, suggestive of tragedy to come.

Like Turgenev's Gerasim and de Maupassant's Gargan, Anna is presented as being inflexible. Her deafness sets her apart from the deceptions and moral compromises that are necessary for survival in the oppressive hospital world: 'Not adaptable with words. She could not blunt the way she saw, with words.'[355] As with Gerasim and Gargan, this inability to conform leads to tragedy. Caught using sign language, both Anna and Latisha are punished, but Latisha bends to the doctor's will, avoids Anna, and refuses to communicate. Anna cannot understand this sudden coldness: frustrated and furious, she attacks a nurse with a broken flower pot. Like the strangling of 'Drops', the death is described in strongly visual and brutal terms: 'bright blood spurting all over the green wall'.[356] As with the two deaf peasants, there is nothing left for the deaf woman afterwards. Latisha says simply: 'They dragged Anna out of there. I never saw her again'.[357] The final pages of the novel trace Latisha's escape from the institution to a life of pretence and unease, living out the isolation that Anna's deafness is used to represent.

### 1.5.4 Objectifying by moral judgment

An attitude of moral judgment towards sensory loss again produces characterisations with positive and negative valences. Jernigan's categories of blindness as 'wickedness and evil' and as 'perfect virtue' are paired in this way, as are his tropes of 'punishment' and 'purification'. Panara's category of the deaf

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[352] Madelyn Arnold, *Bird-Eyes* (New York: St Martin's, 2000), p. 3.
[353] Ibid, p. 49.
[354] Ibid, p. 49.
[355] Ibid, p. 155.
[356] Ibid, p. 216.
[357] Ibid, p. 217.

'accepted with humanitarian spirit', which shares many similarities with Jernigan's blindness as 'perfect virtue', also subjects deaf and blind people to the judgment of the non-impaired. Similarly, Jernigan's category of blindness as 'foolishness and helplessness' consists of contrasting characterisations that call for either mockery or protection (and in the latter formulation often forms a reinforcing pairing with 'perfect virtue'). Whether extolled or denounced, the blind and deaf characters within this category are intended to elicit our approval or condemnation and the emotional force that we bring to the decision is evoked, amplified and explained by their sensory losses.

Kleege has singled out the contemporary thriller *Blind Fear* by popular crime writer Hilary Norman as an example of blindness used to personify evil-doing.[358] Kleege contrasts Jack Donovan, Norman's blind sculptor, with Kipling's painter Dick Heldar.[359] Both artists are unexpectedly blinded, but Heldar rejects the idea of switching from painting to sculpture as hopelessly far-fetched ('Take it away, I may get the touch of the blind in fifty years') and instead lurches on to his suicidal end.[360] By contrast, Donovan has achieved renown for his compelling sculptures of human bodies. He employs three less talented assistants for the mundane tasks that require sight. However, unknown to him the bones that form the framework of his installations are not resin copies but real, acquired by two of his murderous assistants. The grisly secret is uncovered by the novel's naïve heroine Joanna, who is Donovan's guide dog trainer and also becomes his lover. Given her job, she is bizarrely ignorant about blindness, thus facilitating lengthy asides to the reader about the torments that she imagines Donovan to suffer. She is relieved when her flickering suspicions of him prove unjustified. But Donovan judges himself guilty at some level 'of what made this whole nightmare possible […]. Vanity […]. And the kind of blindness that has nothing to do with my eyes'.[361] He means a moral 'blindness', and the risk that he may slip further into this other 'darkness' is made clear by the violent climax, in which one of his murderous assistants tempts him to kill her so that she can be immortalised in one of his sculptures. It is left deliberately ambiguous whether or not Donovan actually goes through with this.

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[358] Hilary Norman, *Blind Fear* (London: Piatkus, 2000).
[359] Georgina Kleege, 'Dialogues with the Blind: Literary Depictions of Blindness and Visual Art', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, 4, 1 (2010), 1–15.
[360] *The Light that Failed*. p. 59
[361] *Blind Fear*. p. 349.

By the novel's end, Donovan is struggling to find a new artistic direction. Reliant upon his one remaining assistant Szabo for the vivid visual descriptions that he (for some unexplained reason) needs to inspire his work, Donovan soaks these up: 'Like computerized human blotting paper'.[362] This indicates the lack of agency that will make him vulnerable to Szabo's evil plan: his assistant intends to 'wait and watch as Donovan became increasingly dissatisfied, as resignation turned, first, to frustration, then spiralled back down to dark, unbearable depression. And then Szabo would bring him his first gift'.[363] The 'gift' will be murder-fresh human bones to draw Donovan back into the grisly circle of evil, but this time as a fully complicit partner in the enterprise. Of course, the pivotal moment for which Szabo is waiting must be 'dark' and 'unbearable' because, as discussed in section 1.5.2, this is how the experience of blindness is invariably represented. It is a recurrent theme of Norman's novel. Frightened by a night-time intruder, Joanna thinks, somewhat banally: '*Donovan has to live in the dark all the time […] I don't know If I could bear it […] Staring into blackness day and night.*'[364] Loaded with nihilism, blindness paves the way to dark acts, as Kleege recognises: 'The open ending of the novel […] deploys familiar ideas about the moral liminality of blind people. Left to his own devices, the blind artist is likely to fall into the hands of evil.'[365]

Although *Blind Fear* is not a novel of great literary merit, it warrants the attention that Kleege and also Bolt have given it because the attitudes it expresses and the connections it makes are commonplace, cutting across literary and popular genres alike.[366] A more literary presentation can be found in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin.* The blind assassin of the title exists in the story within the story-within-the-story, at what Sharon Rose Wilson has called 'the symbolic centre' of the narrative, which 'brings to a focus the motifs of hiding, blindness, futile sacrifice, and silencing that reverberate through the book.'[367] The framing story, told by the elderly Iris Chase-Griffin, features a posthumously published novel, also called *The Blind Assassin,* apparently written by Iris's sister Laura. This features a memoir, again called *The Blind*

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[362] Ibid, p. 359.
[363] Ibid, p. 376.
[364] Ibid, p.144.
[365] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 4.
[366] Bolt, 'Beneficial Blindness', pp.11, 17.
[367] Sharon Rose Wilson, *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations*: *Recent Poetry and Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), p. 136.

*Assassin,* about a love affair between an unnamed couple, whom we come to believe are Laura and a young political activist she was involved with in life, called Alex Thomas. The man in the memoir spins a third tale, once more called *The Blind Assassin*; a science-fiction fantasy set in the city of Sakiel-Norn on the planet Zycron. This is a brutal world of virgin sacrifice to false gods, ritualised rape, and murder. The city has grown rich from the elaborate carpets woven by children who go blind from their work and are then sold on into sexual slavery. Some escape and become skilled assassins. One, the assassin of the title, falls in love with the sacrificial maiden he is sent to kill; who, like the rest of her kind, has had her tongue torn out to prevent her from disturbing the ritual. The literal blindness in this inner story, as Wilson points out, is matched by the figurative 'blindness' of Iris and Laura in the outer one: 'But where the blind assassin of the science fiction novel has sharpened his other senses to compensate for his blindness, the other characters in the framing novel remain blind and fail to see important clues.'[368]

Ruth Parkin-Gounelas has pointed to the parallel betrayals across the stories, linked by this theme of blindness.[369] A key example is the moment when Iris betrays her sister. Having 'already committed treachery in my heart', she steps towards Alex in the street 'Blind but sure-footed'.[370] The twist in the tale, as the reader gradually discovers, is that Laura's memoir is in fact Iris's: the lovers are Iris and Alex, not Laura and Alex, and the falsification was a revenge upon Iris's husband, who raped Laura and duped Iris. As Atwood has said during an interview: 'Of course, you know who the blind assassin really is. Ultimately it's Iris. […] People do things without knowing what they're doing.'[371] 'Blindness' in Atwood's novel is bound up with betrayal, cruelty and transgression. Tellingly, in the same interview, Atwood acknowledges a debt to both Wells and Stevenson for her conception of blindness:

> Discussing blindness, she pointed to several literary precedents, among them H. G. Wells's story 'The Country of the Blind' and the character of Blind Pew in 'Treasure Island,' who frightened her as a child. 'The poetic

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[368] Ibid, p. 145.

[369] Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, '"What Isn't There" in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*: The Psychoanalysis of Duplicity', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50, 3 (Fall 2004), 681–700, p. 692.

[370] *The Blind Assassin*, p. 321.

[371] 'An Inner Eye That Sheds Light on Life's Mysteries', Mel Gussow, *New York Times* (10 Oct 2000). <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/10/arts/10ASSA.html> [accessed 07 Oct 2015]

contrast between the eyes of the body and the inner eye, the eye of vision, was of great interest to me'.[372]

Jernigan, who, as shown in section 1.3.4, set *Treasure Island* within his 'blindness as unrelieved wickedness and evil' category; and identified 'The Country of the Blind' as a 'symbol or parable' that uses blindness to invert moral values, would recognise — though hardly admire — Atwood's self-confessed sphere of influence.

The inverse of blindness as wickedness and evil is, naturally, blindness as perfect virtue, and the previous section has already shown an example of this in Hugo's heroine Déa, whose blindness is the crowning glory of her perfect feminine virtue. In much the same vein, Louisa May Alcott's sentimental story for young adults 'The Blind Lark' (1886) features Lizzie, nine years old and 'condemned to life-long helplessness, loneliness and darkness — for she was blind'.[373] As Catherine Kudlick notes, Lizzie is full of virtues; she brings up her little brother, looks after the house while her mother works, and sings like a lark.[374] Although Kudlick is determined to read a modern disability studies awareness into Alcott's story, which was written to gain support for the Perkins School for the Blind, the strain is obvious. It is full of clichés and stereotypes, not least the image of the virtuous blind, 'poor little creatures' who must be taught how to help themselves.[375] Lizzie, with her angelic voice and pretty face, is well placed for 'singing pennies out of pockets, and sweetly reminding people not to forget this noble charity'.[376]

Illustrating Panara's category of 'the deaf accepted with humanitarian spirit and sentiment', the idealised nineteenth-century deaf heroines identified by Batson and Bergman follow a similar pattern. Alfred de Musset's story 'Pierre and Camille' (1844) presents little Camille as perfect in every way, except for her deafness. That flaw heightens her purity with pathos: 'nothing was more beautiful than this living form, closed against the outside world, and from which her poor

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[372] Ibid, n. pag.

[373] Louisa M. Alcott, 'The Blind Lark', *St Nicholas* [serial], 14, 1 (Nov. 1886), 12–19, p. 12.

[374] Catherine Kudlick, 'Guy de Maupassant, Louisa May Alcott, and Youth at Risk: Lessons from the New Paradigm of Disability', *Paedagogica Historica*, 45, 1–2 (2009), 37–49, p. 44.

[375] 'The Blind Lark', p. 17.

[376] Ibid, p. 19.

soul was unable to escape'.[377] The similarly depersonalised heroine of Dickens's 'Doctor Marigold', 'deaf and dumb' Sophy, bears a strong resemblance to other faultlessly feminine Dickensian daughters.[378] Shrewdly, however, Batson and Bergman point out that despite Dickens's sympathy for his deaf character, he 'could not conceive of deafness other than as a kind of curse, the only salvation from the curse being to have a hearing child'.[379] The climax of both de Musset's and Dickens's stories come when their heroines (both suitably married to deaf men) produce hearing grandchildren for their hearing father/adopted father. The perfect virtue of the children's deaf mothers has thereby been rewarded by breeding out their one flaw.

Such idealisation of sensory loss is not limited to the nineteenth century. Ed McBain's popular '87th Precinct' series of police procedural crime stories feature sign-language user Teddy Carella as the beautiful, sweet-natured wife of one of the detective protagonists. Commenting on the pornographic level of sexual violence in McBain's novels, Steven Knight links Teddy Carella's character to this underlying misogyny: a mere prop to the 'hypermasculinism' of her detective husband, she is 'a beautiful blonde who is literally dumb, and deaf as well, and is reduced in her name, Teddy, to a sexist toy'.[380] McBain has another supposedly deaf character: a cunning and evil Professor Moriartyesque villain known as 'The Deaf Man'. He wears a hearing aid in one ear but this appears to be no more than a quirk, since he shows little sign of actual deafness and carries out taunting telephone conversations with the detectives without communication problems. When questioned in an interview about this arch-villain's creation, McBain responded: 'I thought it would be fun to have a villain who was the other side of the Teddy Carella coin. "Deaf Angel" and "Deaf Devil," you know?'[381] Deafness here is clearly a 'stock characterisation' of the type that Mitchell and Snyder identify as a 'narrative prosthesis'; whereby an easily-bolted-on disability makes a character stand out from the herd. McBain gives it a shoddily thin veneer of characterisation by applying an attitude of moral

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[377] Alfred de Musset, 'Pierre and Camille', in Batson and Bergman, pp. 8–56, p. 25.

[378] Batson and Bergman, p. 58.

[379] Ibid, p. 58.

[380] Steven Knight, *Crime Fiction since 1800: Detection, Death, Diversity,* 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 159.

[381] Jon Jordan, 'Interview with Ed McBain [Evan Hunter]', *Books'n'Bytes* (01 Jan. 2002). <http://www.booksnbytes.com/auth_interviews/ed_mcbain.html> [accessed 28 February 2016]

judgment with his devil/angel trope. As with Panara's category of the deaf as 'melodramatic plot devices', such opportunism leans upon the prevailing prejudices that form a convenient ideation of sensory loss. This offers an easy option for writers who want to add interest to underdeveloped characters, or to flesh out weak plot lines.

As already noted above, in addition to forming a pairing of opposites with 'evil and wickedness', sensory loss as 'perfect virtue' can also be placed within a mutually reinforcing pairing with 'foolishness and helplessness'. Nineteenth-century heroines are particularly prone to this, as section 1.3.5 saw Jernigan point out. Laura Richards' Melody, Dickens's Bertha and Sophy, Collins's Madonna and Miss Finch, and Bulwer-Lytton's Nydia, as previously discussed, are all idealised female characters whose sensory loss adds to the unworldly perfection of their virtuous, submissive femininity. To twenty-first-century readers armed with even the most basic of feminist critiques, such inability to manage for themselves can be read as a reflection of patriarchal attitudes, with blindness and deafness representing the most extreme patriarchal oppression. Such a reading seems appropriate to *My Share of the World* (1861), a novel by 'blind poetess' Frances Browne, which paints a pitiable picture of blindness.[382] Narrated as the fictional autobiography of a sighted man, Frederic Favoursham, it describes how the woman he loves, Lucy, goes blind. As Heather Tilley has shown, Lucy's failing sight is symptomatic both of her anxious psychological state (she has an unhappy marriage) and of her subjugated female position with its diminished set of options. Lucy is a 'passive and silent victim', whose eventual suicide is given additional pathos (or rendered laughable, depending on one's perspective) by the discovery that her affliction has rendered even her suicide note illegible.[383] Although Browne herself forged a successful literary career despite being blinded by scarlet fever as an infant, her novel presents a view of blindness as enfeebled frailty: the ultimate in helpless femininity.

Browne's synthesis of weakness, femininity and blindness both contrasts with and reinforces a more significant portrayal that appeared fourteen years earlier. *Jane Eyre* also uses blindness to signify a feminising, weakening influence, although Brontë subverts this gendered association by applying it to

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[382] Frances Browne, *My Share of the World* (London: The British Library, 2010).
[383] Heather Tilley, 'Frances Browne, the "Blind Poetess": Towards a Poetics of Blind Writing', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, 3, 2 (2009), 147–61, p. 156.

the hero, not the heroine. Rochester's blinding is a symbolic castration, signalling the transfer of power in their relationship to Jane. His arrogant masculinity is excised along with his sight, reducing to a childlike state. He tells Jane: 'You know I was proud of my strength; but what is it now when I must give it over to foreign guidance, as a child does its weakness?'[384] Bolt situates this emasculation within an overarching patriarchal ocularism that runs counter to the feminist reading of the text so influentially set out by Gilbert and Gubar.[385] The novel's attitudes are patriarchal 'insofar as they are based on ocularcentric epistemology', privileging the experience of the sighted over the blind in a way that is 'unappreciative of the experience of people who have visual impairments'.[386] Bolt links this 'ocularcentric subject position' to both Kipling's *The Light That Failed* and Milton's *Samson Agonistes*; finding in all three the belief 'that a man cannot live happily without sight.'[387] Like Kipling's Dick Heldar, Rochester is robbed of his vitality along with his vision; although Rochester is allowed a partial recovery of both in order to produce an heir and is not forced to bring about his own death as Dick and Samson must. Bolt summarises:

> Like Kipling, Brontë portrays someone who has a visual impairment but takes into account only the experience of those who do not have visual impairments. The result is a diminished character who augments the status of the sighted protagonist, a functionality that corresponds with feminism only insofar as the former is male and the latter female. That is to say, while inverting the patriarchal schema […] Brontë actively endorses the binary opposition of normativism and disability.[388]

Moving from the evil/virtue/helplessness grouping to punishment/purification, I suggest that the attitude of moral judgment prevails in a similar manner; differing only in that the source of judgment has been shifted to give greater, even divine, authority. A more contemporary illustration of the punishment trope than Jernigan's examples of Sophocles and Shakespeare can be found in Cormac McCarthy's 1968 novel *Outer Dark*, which tells the story of an incestuous brother and sister, Culla and Rinthy Holme. They produce a son,

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[384] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 514.
[385] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress', in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2000), pp. 336–71.
[386] David Bolt, 'The Blindman in the Classic: Femininisms, Ocularcentrism, and *Jane Eyre'*, in *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jane Eyre, Discourse, Disability,* ed. by David Bolt, Julia Miele Rodas and Elizabeth J. Donaldson (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2012), pp. 32–50, p. 35.
[387] Ibid, pp. 34, 49.
[388] Ibid, pp. 49–50.

whom Culla abandons in the forest, but who is then saved by a passing tinker. When Rintha has recovered from the birth, she sets off in search of her nameless baby, with Culla in pursuit. Three strange and vengeful travellers repeatedly cross their path, murdering those whom Culla has encountered, until, in a brutal, bloody conclusion, they kill and devour the baby in front of Culla because he will not admit his sin. Southern Gothic in style, grotesque and horrifying, the novel makes strong use of blindness as a motif, woven into a relentless theme of shadows and darkness. This is a threatening, hellish world of violence and retribution, with a blackening sun; where babies are abandoned in the night and shadows form pictures of spectral violence on the walls. Characters are repeatedly described in terms which make them effectively blind or visually incompetent: the boy with 'cadaverous eyes'; the clerk whose 'eyes were wandering about dementedly'; the teamster feeling along the ground for his wrench so that Culla 'thought for a minute the man was blind'; Rinthy's 'doll's eyes of painted china'; Culla's 'blind eyeballs' in the river storm; the black-bearded murderer whose eyes are 'shadowed lunettes with nothing there at all'; the drover washed down the river with 'two walled eyes beyond hope'; the parson with 'a pair of octagonal glasses on the one pane of which the late sun shone while a watery eye peered from the naked wire aperture of the other'; and, finally, the baby with 'one eyeless and angry red socket like a stokehole for a brain in flames'.[389] Images of blindness are woven into the baby's horrific end: as its throat is cut, Culla sees 'the blade wink in the light like a long cat's eye'; the child 'hung there with its one eye glazing over like a wet stone', while one of the strange travellers looks up with 'witless eyes, and buried his moaning face in its throat'.[390]

As Petra Mundik has described, the brutality of McCarthy's fictional world is variously interpreted either as making human endeavour meaningless, or as meting out harsh punishment on human sinfulness: 'Critical opinion concerning McCarthy's work tends to divide into two camps: namely that of the nihilists […] and that of the moralists.'[391] Mundik herself demonstrates the Gnostic influences on McCarthy's work and his imagery in particular. Although she focuses on his

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[389] Cormac McCarthy, *Outer Dark* (London: Picador, 2010), pp. 62; 88; 139; 25; 172; 178; 225; 228; 240.
[390] Ibid, p. 244.
[391] Petra Mundik, '"Striking the Fire Out of the Rock": Gnostic Theology in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*', *South Central Review*, 26. 3, (Fall 2009), 72–97, p. 72.

1985 novel *Blood Meridian*, her conclusions are aimed at his work in general and can also be usefully applied to *Outer Dark.* In order to demonstrate the link with McCarthy's work, Mundik gives an overview of Gnostic beliefs:

> According to Gnostic theology, the entire manifest cosmos was created by a hostile (or at best ignorant) force of darkness and is thus a hideous aberration. This force of darkness usually takes the form of a creator-God known as the *demiurge* […] [who] rules over all that he has created, […] while the real or *alien* God remains wholly transcendent and removed from the created world. […] Humanity has a divided nature, composed of a body and soul, which were created by and belong to the demiurge, but also a spirit or *pneuma* which belongs to the alien God. […] Thus people […] carry within them the potential for immanence as soul and flesh, or transcendence as pure spirit.[392]

Mundik glosses *gnosis* as 'Knowledge of the true state of the cosmos and of the nature of the alien God'; and describes the belief in the cosmos's impermanence as the 'only source of comfort' for the Gnostics, and the only salvation from the manifest evil of McCarthy's 'desolate, hostile landscapes'.[393] Considered within the context of this Gnostic framework, McCarthy's endlessly-reworked blindness trope should not only be read as an 'intense poetic defamiliarization' which reorients the familiar human world into this terrifying Gnostic vision; but also, I suggest, as a symbol of ignorance and destruction, signifiying the darkness to which unwitting humanity is condemned.[394] This is prefigured by Culla's dream at the beginning of the book, in which a blind prophet promises a crowd that they will be healed before the end of the sun's eclipse, but the light never returns and the crowd turns on Culla instead. At the book's conclusion, this theme of blindness and destruction is reinforced. Culla shambles down a lonely road that ends in a hellish swamp: 'a smoking garden of the dead'; 'a landscape of the damned'.[395] He turns back, passing a blind man, and the book concludes with the sentence: 'Someone should tell a blind man before setting him out that way.'[396] Not that warnings would achieve anything: in this world, blindness and darkness stand for godless indifference; an impenetrable barrier to salvation.

In a Christian theology, however, redemption offers release from punishment. Although Charles Kingsley also figures blindness in the form of punishment; as a Church of England clergyman and active Christian Socialist

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[392] Ibid, p. 73.
[393] Ibid, pp. 74–75.
[394] Ibid, p. 72.
[395] *Outer Dark*, p. 251.
[396] Ibid, p. 252.

reformer, he gives it a positively charged valence.[397] Whereas *Outer Dark* sets up blindness as an absolute barrier to redemption, Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855) makes it the means by which sins may be purified. The punishment of blindness is explicitly linked to Amyas Leigh's sin of pride, which must be humbled:

> 'Oh, God!' shrieked the great proud sea-captain, 'Oh, God, I am blind! blind! blind!' And writhing in his great horror, he called to Cary to kill him and put him out of his misery, and then wailed for his mother to come and help him, as if he had been a boy once more; while Brimblecombe and Cary, and the sailors who crowded round the cabin-door, wept as if they too had been boys once more.[398]

Denied the release of death, Amyas scrutinises himself and finds his error: 'I have been a fiend when I thought myself the grandest of men, yea, a very avenging angel out of heaven. But God has shown me my sin, and we have made up our quarrel forever.'[399] The blindness/insight metaphor has been activated; with this 'truer vision', Amyas is in effect reborn. His shipmates look into his face: 'It was exhausted, but clear and gentle, like the face of a new-born babe.'[400] The dangerous adventurer is now led penitently home: 'Will you take me in, and look after this useless carcase? I shall not be so very troublesome, mother.'[401] Gone with his eyesight is his spirit and sinful masculinity: like Brontë's Rochester, he is a helpless child again.

## 1.5.5 Denying agency and respect

Jernigan's category of blindness as 'abnormality or dehumanisation' and Panara's category of the deaf as 'freaks, grotesques and distortions of reality' share common cause. The fundamental attitude determining such representations is an Othering process, by which blind and deaf people are cast in dehumanising ways such that they seem less deserving of agency or respect. As I hope to show, both types of portrayal prop up the perception of sensory loss as something that lessens the individual's humanity and, thus removes the right to self-determination.

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[397] For biographical details see Una Pope-Hennessy, *Canon Charles Kingsley* (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

[398] Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!,* 2 vols (London: J. P. Taylor, 1899), II, p. 444.

[399] Ibid, p. 444.

[400] Ibid, p. 445.

[401] Ibid, p. 451.

Hania Nashef's analysis of two contemporary novels, Saramago's *Blindness* and J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), demonstrates how both make use of a dehumanisation trope.[402] In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, an unnamed magistrate controls a remote outpost of an unidentified empire. The terrifying Colonel Joll arrives to suppress an alleged barbarian riot and inflicts a brutal regime of torture and murder. The magistrate becomes involved with a barbarian girl who has been partially blinded; leading to his downfall as he is violently degraded by Colonel Joll. Meanwhile, in *Blindness*, an eye doctor is one of the first victims of a mysterious 'white evil' — a sudden contagious blindness that sweeps across the unnamed land. The government quarantine sthe infected in an old mental institution, but this proves ineffective. Eventually, almost everyone is blind and the filth, aggression and degradation of the quarantine zone spreads everywhere. Unable to run the systems which keep civilisation alive — banking, utilities, shops, farming — the blind are reduced to useless, humiliated wanderers; unable to feed or wash themselves, and destined eventually to be eaten by roaming packs of dogs.

Nashef identifies the fall from power of both Coetzee's magistrate and Saramago's doctor as a Kafkaesque process of 'becoming-animal', a term used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988).[403] There are many attributes that aid this process of deterritorialisation, in particular imprisonment and feminisation. Blindness is an important part of both. Within Coetzee's novel, Nashef identifies the inflicted partial blindness of the barbarian girl (and other of her compatriots) as a loss of selfhood that enables the magistrate to 'look through' her without seeing her as a person. Nashef also pinpoints Colonel Joll's dark glasses, which signify the moral 'blindness' of the colonial empire that he represents. Within Saramago's novel, Nashef demonstrates that:

> although the characters regain their sight toward the end of the novel, the becoming-blind has at once eroded their perceived humanity and exposed the animal within. In a Deleuzian and Guattarian becoming, a reversal is impossible; thus, a return to the norms they once knew is not feasible.[404]

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[402] J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Vintage, 2004). Saramago's novel has been previously discussed in section 1.4.4.
[403] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2003).
[404] Hania A. M. Nashef, 'Becomings in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and José Saramago's *Blindness*', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 47, 1 (2010), 21–41, p. 40.

This 'animal within' is also a recurrent theme of representations of deafness. As noted in section 1.5.3, it surfaces in both de Maupassant's and Turgenev's renderings of deaf peasants Gargan and Gerasim. The supposed similarity between deaf people and animals is conferred, as Davis has shown, by the linguistic barrier and in particular by the pervasive (but incorrect) oralist belief that Sign must be a crude gestural device without the mind-expanding abilities of speech. This hierarchisation of languages is reflected in a revealing manner within American novelist Edward Bellamy's short story 'To Whom This May Come' (1898). Following a burgeoning Utopian trend within science fiction, this story pre-dates Wells's 'The Country of the Blind' by six years and shows considerable similarities in both subject matter and treatment. In both stories, a man comes across an isolated and hitherto unknown strand of humanity who suffer what seems to be a terrible congenital affliction: muteness in Bellamy's evocation and blindness in Wells's. In both cases, the protagonist's initial expectations of automatic superiority are dashed; for the afflicted 'race' has evolved powers that not only compensate for the sensory loss, but surpass the abilities of the speaking/sighted protagonist.

Bellamy's 'race' is one of mind readers, descended from ship-wrecked Persian psychics whose abilities have evolved through generations of selective breeding. Thrown ashore on their island in the 'vast and unexplored' Southern Ocean, the narrator notes their 'smiling intelligence' but is at first puzzled by their 'unbroken silence'.[405] They do not respond to any of the many European languages that he speaks, nor, as the 'extraordinary conjecture' that they may be deaf strikes him, to the 'deaf and dumb alphabet'.[406] The hierarchy of speech above manual language is made clear. He is described as having to 'resort to the sign language', which they find even more ridiculous than his speech: it 'overcame the last remnant of gravity in the already profusely smiling group'.[407] Helpless with laughter, though striving to be polite, the inhabitants produce an elderly man who can speak, albeit with 'the most pitiable abortion of a voice' that has 'all the defects in articulation of a child's who is just beginning to talk', and

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[405] Edward Bellamy, 'To Whom This May Come', in *The Blindman's World and Other Stories*, 389–415, pp. 390–91.
[406] Ibid, p. 391.
[407] Ibid, p. 391.

lacks even a child's 'strength of tone', becoming 'a mere alternation of squeaks and whispers'.[408]

Having cast the tribe's lone voice in terms of a lower level of development (both childlike and brutish), the text goes on to present all speech in this way, as a more primitive style of communication ('gibberish […] as unintelligible itself as the growling of animals') than the mind reading used by this more evolved 'race'.[409] As I shall discuss, this is precisely the hierarchisation by which Sign has been persistently (mis)represented as a more primitive communication than speech. There is an ocularcentrism here that Bolt would recognise: mind reading is cast in strongly visual terms: 'direct mind-to-mind vision, whereby pictures of the total mental state were communicated, instead of the imperfect descriptions of single thoughts which words at best could give, induced an invincible distaste for the laborious impotence of language.'[410]

Strongly redolent of the logocentrism that Derrida has deconstructed, as discussed in section 1.4.3, by which speech is perceived as having a more direct connection with thought than non-phonetic language (such as writing or Sign), Bellamy's story presents mind-reading as simultaneously more human, moral, clean and even godly than speech. The mind readers lead a life 'so largely spiritual' that even heaven 'suggests to them a state only slightly more refined than they may already know on earth'.[411] Shared thoughts are pure ones, leaving the mind with 'no curtained chamber to which we may go to grovel' and without such a 'foul cellar', this 'race' enjoys 'ideal mental and moral health'.[412] Friendship and love are deeper and more sincere, because each party has a complete knowledge of the other's thoughts and intentions. When the narrator forms a romantic relationship, it is necessarily lopsided because he cannot read his lover's mind as she does his. She, in turn, feels a 'depth of pity' for him as a speech-user, since he thus lacks the means for true 'self-knowledge' or 'sense of identity'; he cannot know the 'core of the soul' in himself, only the mind that clothes it.[413]

At last, through another shipwreck, the narrator is swept away from the idyllic island. He is horrified by his rescuers' speech, which now to him is

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[408] Ibid, p. 392.
[409] Ibid, pp. 393–94.
[410] Ibid, pp. 400–01.
[411] Ibid, p. 414.
[412] Ibid, pp. 404, 410.
[413] Ibid, pp. 410–11.

'grotesque': 'a constant clatter of hissing, guttural, and explosive noises, eked out by all manner of facial contortions and bodily gestures.'[414] He would rather die than return to the 'talking nations'; life among speech-users could only be 'bitter mockery' to him now.[415] Although it might seem amusing or refreshing to see speech, rather than Sign, thus presented as grotesque and dehumanising, this by no means indicates an elevation of the status of deaf people. The mind-readers are not deaf, they can hear speech without understanding it, just as we might hear an animal grunting without finding it meaningful. Their communication is closer to thought than is speech; and thus the relationship between the mind readers and speech-users stands as a logocentric analogy of the supposed relationship between speech-users and Signers. The inversion, whereby it is speech, not Sign, that is considered to be primitive and incapable of fully expressing or shaping thoughts, is a technique of defamiliarisation, but the underlying attitude remains one that dehumanises and devalues deafness.

As Esme Cleall has noted, there are strong colonialist overtones to the story: 'Degeneration, evolution, disability and colonialism play off each other in the anxieties of difference expressed in the encounter.'[416] Repeatedly referred to as a 'race', the 'white and handsome people' on the island are 'evidently of a high order of civilisation'.[417] This hierarchy of racial superiority entwined with a more perfect form of linguistic communication reinforces the implied connection between the story's grotesque speech-users and real-life assumptions about deaf people. Cleall notes that in the real world, racial attitudes towards deafness were gaining ground: 'the trend towards oralism carried colonialist resonances.'[418] Thus, the scarcely-human rescuers in Bellamy's story, who communicate by guttural hissing and explosive noises and appear to be a more degenerate form of humanity than the mind readers, reflect 'acute concerns about degeneration' and deafness that were prevalent at the time.[419] Alexander Graham Bell expressed such worries in a detailed statistical report to the National Academy of Sciences in Washington: 'Those who believe as I do, that the production of a defective race of human beings would be a great calamity to

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[414] Ibid, p. 414.
[415] Ibid, pp. 397, 415.
[416] Esme Cleall, 'Orientalising Deafness: Race and Disability in Imperial Britain', *Social Identities: Journal for the study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 21, 1 (2015), 22–36, p. 23,
[417] 'To Whom This May Come', p. 390.
[418] Cleall, p. 30.
[419] Ibid, p. 24.

the world, will examine carefully the causes that lead to the intermarriages of the deaf with the object of applying a remedy.'[420] Bell's suggested amelioration contained both 'repressive' methods, including legal regulation of deaf people's marriages; and 'preventative' ones, with a range of measures to reverse the 'tendency to the formation of a deaf-mute community'.[421] These measures, many of which came to pass, include the suppression of Sign; ending the employment of deaf teachers; 'instruction in articulation and speech reading'; limiting the size of deaf schools ('the school that would most perfectly fulfil the condition required would contain only one deaf child'); and taking all steps possible to limit or prevent congenitally deaf people from associating or forming bonds with each other.[422] As discussed in section 1.4.3, such controls inflicted irrevocable damage on generations of deaf people. The rhetoric of repression flows from an attitude that denies the person with sensory loss respect and the right to self-determination. Literary tropes of dehumanisation and grotesquery work to justify and reinforce this attitude.

## 1.5.6 Distorting into mirrored normalcy

The repressive systems of patriarchy and colonialism treat the Other as lesser: a degraded reflection of their own humanity. As the political perspective provided thus far has aimed to show, the epistemological privileging of able-bodiedness over disability is another form of this power dynamic. Manifested as the ocularcentrism and audism that we have already seen identified by Bolt and Bauman respectively, it hides in plain sight, invisible in its hypervisibility, but reveals itself under the trained disability study lens. This final attitudinal perspective produces some of the most obvious manifestations of blindness and deafness in literature, since sensory loss takes centre stage. Not, however, as a representation of the actual experience of impairment but rather as a distorting mirror through which an implicitly fully-sensory-able humanity can view itself. Jernigan's category of blindness in the form of 'symbol or parable' and Panara's category of deafness exemplifying 'man's inhumanity to man' are both expressions of this attitude. Blindness or deafness are used as features of

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[420] Alexander Graham Bell, 'Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race', *National Academy of Sciences Memoirs*, 2, 4 (1884), 4–90, p. 41.
[421] Ibid, pp. 46–47.
[422] Ibid, pp. 46–47.

estrangement: the blind or deaf Other is cast as a lesser form than normalcy; an object to be used for a moral lesson by the majority.

      As shown in section 1.3.9, Jernigan listed Maeterlinck's *The Blind* as an example of such a 'parable'. Reviewing a contemporary production of Maeterlinck's play for the *Disability Studies Quarterly*, David Kornhaber describes the characters 'stumbling awkwardly around the playing space, tentatively groping for something to hold on to', and posits that the director's interpretation of the play makes blindness stand 'for abandonment, both literal and figurative. […] even we in the audience are made to feel helpless and alone. […] Do not just have pity on disabled people, his actors seem to ask. Have pity on us all.'[423] Kornhaber's unquestioning acceptance of the equivalence between literal blindness and blindness-as-figurative-abandonment, together with his implicit assumption that the 'we' of the audience excludes 'the disabled', props up a viewpoint which he seems to share with the play's director, that pity should automatically be conferred upon the disabled. ('Do not *just* have pity on disabled people').[424] Though widespread, this attitude is one that Joseph P. Shapiro rejected in 1993: 'The disability rights movement, after all, is a rebellion against being cast by society as pitiable victims.'[425] As Shapiro highlights, pity is oppression because it locates the unequal situation of disabled people in the unmodifiable fact of their impairment rather than in the modifiable external situation: 'there is no pity or tragedy in disability […] it is society's myths, fears, and stereotypes that most make being disabled difficult.'[426] These produce, in popular culture, religion and history, 'constant descriptions of a disabled person's proper role as either an object of pity or a source of inspiration'.[427] A favourite recourse of newspapers everywhere, the image of the 'inspirational' disabled person, who 'overcomes' their disability in a way that makes the majority feel good about the world, is a source of frustration to many disabled people. As one contributor to a recent internet discussion on the topic posted, to general

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[423] David Kornhaber, 'Review Maeterlinck, Maurice (Writer) & Thorgeirsson, Kristjan (Director). *The Blind.* [Play]. The Vortex Theater Company, New York City, March 5–April 3, 2005', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25, 3 (Summer 2005) <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/598/775> [accessed 23 July 2015].
[424] I have added the italic and bold emphasis to '**just**', making visible what the syntax clearly requires from a voicing of the original sentence.
[425] Joseph P. Shapiro, *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Crown Archetype, 2011), p. 104.
[426] Ibid, pp. 4–5.
[427] Ibid, p. 30.

approval: 'Don't call me an inspiration. Be your own damn inspiration.'[428] The response may sound rude or begrudging to the well-meaning able-bodied person, but it is born from a deep-seated resentment at being objectified for the purpose of an uplifting message. Whether positively or negatively framed, as Shapiro asserts, such object-lessons 'contribute to the discrimination and minority status hated by most disabled people'.[429]

Batson and Bergman include in their anthology a story called 'At the Dances of the Deaf Mutes' by Austrian psychoanalyst and writer Walter Toman. This makes communication between deaf people and blind people an allegory for a generalised message about human limitations in communication. Regular dance-hall events for 'deaf-mutes' have proved spectacularly unsuccessful since the dancers cannot hear the music. Technological solutions (flashing lights, vibrating floors) are tried, but fail. The result is grotesque chaos, reminiscent of the helpless gropings of the blind in Maeterlinck's play: all is 'mad confusion' as the deaf dancers 'hopping around' in dislocated isolation 'bumped into one another, […] stepped on one another's feet, tore their stockings and trouser cuffs, insulted one another' and 'very often became violent'.[430] Then, one deaf man, Peter Perz, brings a blind girl, Ilse Weninger, who is a superb dancer. He takes his rhythm from her and they dance beautifully. Gradually more deaf people bring blind partners and the dances are a success — although the communication between the couples works only when dancing. Peter and Ilse become a pair because he 'took special lessons in voice projecting' and she learns sign language, but the others, 'of lesser intelligence', marry 'their own

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[428] '"Don't Call Me An Inspiration": Disabled People List the Most Annoying Things Able-bodied People do to Try and Help', Christopher Hooton, *The Independent (Lifestyle, Health and Families)* (23 April 2015). <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/dont-call-me-an-inspiration-disabled-people-list-the-most-annoying-things-able-bodied-people-do-to-10197512.html> [accessed 20 October 2015]

[429] Shapiro, p. 30.

[430] Walter Toman, 'At the Dances of the Deaf-Mutes', in Batson and Bergman, pp. 198–201, p. 199. The story locates the source of the violence in the deficiencies of 'the language of deaf-mutes', which 'offers too little release for angry feelings'. As Batson and Bergman note: 'Toman, despite his interest in communication, obviously knew little of sign language' […]. To those of us with any inkling of the dramatic force of sign language, this statement is absurd.' (p. 198).

kind'.[431] Nevertheless, all find 'sheer bliss' and 'sheer delight' in the ceremony of the dance.[432]

In the field of psychoanalysis, Toman was known for his work on sibling birth order and its effect on family relationships.[433] A similar preoccupation with structural patterns of communication is evident in this story, and Batson and Bergman speculate that the two groups, the deaf and the blind, may stand for men and women or for different nationalities.[434] Since, as they say, few clues are offered, I suggest that no specific groups are intended but rather that the deaf and the blind stand for any and all groups into which humanity may be divided. Although Batson and Bergman call it a 'psychological study', the story offers no entry into the thoughts of either the deaf or the blind and, as they note, the most important feature is 'the nature of the communication that is possible: the dance itself [...] stylized and ritualized'.[435] Blind and deaf people, with their particular barriers to interaction, are thereby used to mirror back to a fully sensory-able readership the stylisation and rituals that underly 'normal' communication.

Returning to Batson and Bergman's theme of a shift in representations of deafness, from individual isolation in the nineteenth century, to a generalised loneliness of all humanity in the twentieth (discussed in section 1.5.4), I will now point out a parallel shift in the symbolisation of 'man's inhumanity to man'. As Batson and Bergman identify, both Turgenev and de Maupassant chose deafness to embody political suppression: 'for both of them, a deaf person is the most suppressed of people', and therefore makes an ideal representative of the 'suppressed masses'.[436] The deaf peasants Gerasim and Gargan are 'literally and figuratively without a voice, unable to speak out and convey the misery of their existence, or to change anything except through direct brutal action.'[437] Their inner worlds are not portrayed, indeed they appear to have none; they operate by actions, not words. This confers upon them a nobility and dignity of character that shields them from the debasement of moral compromise to which the hearing are subjected. Such 'natural' black and white morality, incapable even of conceiving greyness, reflects back starkly to (implicitly non-deaf and

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[431] Ibid, p. 201.
[432] Ibid, p. 201.
[433] Walter Toman, *Family Constellation: Theory and Practice of a Psychological Game* (New York: Springer, 1961)
[434] Batson and Bergman, p. 198.
[435] Ibid, p. 198.
[436] Ibid, p. 124.
[437] Ibid, p. 124.

therefore assumedly more sophisticated) readers our own inherent moral failings.

Moving into the twentieth century, the theme becomes one of struggle against such suppression. Here, Batson and Bergman present Bernard Malamud's strange but compelling story 'Talking Horse' (1972). The horse, Abramowitz, narrates the story. Convinced that he is a man trapped inside a horse's body, he enters into an increasingly violent conflict with his deaf master Goldberg who mistreats him, exploits him in a circus act, and will not allow him to ask questions. At last, Abramowitz attacks Goldberg and manages to emerge (as far as the navel) from his horse body to gallop away 'a free centaur'.[438] Batson and Bergman argue convincingly that Goldberg 'is not meant as a real person but represents an authority figure whom Abramowitz carries around in his head — […] something we all do. A parent, teacher, priest, anyone who had influenced us'.[439] Thus, deafness is a mechanism to make Goldberg 'allegorically a creature of Abramowitz's compulsive obedience'.[440] This is borne out by the way in which Abramowitz must himself articulate Goldberg's commands. As a 'deaf-mute', Goldberg cannot talk: if he tries to speak aloud, all that comes out are nonsense sounds: 'geee, gooo, gaaa, gaaw […] and sometimes gool goon geek gonk'.[441] Their communication is asymmetric: Goldberg reads Abramowitz's lips and taps out 'Morse code messages' on the horse's skull 'with his big knuckles — crack, crack, crack; I feel the vibrations run through my bones'.[442] The emphasis on physicality bears out Batson and Bergman's conclusion that Goldberg's deafness is intended to make Abramowitz's struggle with this reified form of an internalised authority figure 'more palpable'. [443] With Goldberg's commands literally ringing in Abramowitz's head, the man-in-the-horse is unable to shut them out. His master's deafness increases his frustration: 'he rears, rocks, gallops in his stall; but what good is a gallop if there's no place to go, and Goldberg can't, or won't, hear complaints, pleas, protest?'[444]

The deaf person, then, in Malamud's evocation, is an embodied version of the internalised authority figure forced upon us all: oblivious to our distress,

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[438] Bernard Malamud, 'Talking Horse', in Batson and Bergman, pp. 175–97, p. 197.
[439] Batson and Bergman, p. 124.
[440] Ibid, p. 174.
[441] 'Talking Horse', p. 179.
[442] Ibid, p. 176.
[443] Batson and Bergman, p. 124.
[444] 'Talking Horse', p. 180.

transmitting unwanted thoughts directly into our heads, and preventing us from achieving our true destiny as free human beings. Such 'deafness' is a metaphor to reveal to us the 'normal' condition. Similarly, as Ben-Moshe notes of Saramago's *Blindness*, sensory loss is made part of an 'ableist metaphor that appropriates blindness as its signifier'.[445] At the end of Saramago's story, when the virulent epidemic of blindness lifts as abruptly and inexplicably as it descended, the doctor's wife declares: 'I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see.'[446] Ben-Moshe interprets this as the key to Saramago's use of 'blindness': 'to create an allegory about the breakdown of humanity and morality in modern societies. He suggests that as a society, we cannot deal with our post/modern state of affairs with its rampant violence, oppression, and lack of empathy.'[447] Blindness in this fictional world is the most extreme form of Otherness. As the old man with the black eyepatch says to his fellow blinded characters in the novel: 'Perhaps humanity will manage to live without eyes, but then it will cease to be humanity, the result is obvious, which of us think of ourselves as being as human as we believed ourselves to be before?'[448]

The prevailing attitude that determines the production of such works is one in which sensory loss is an Othering feature. It is used to defamiliarise an aspect of normalcy and reflect it back to the reader. Kleege has collected a diverse group of writings that figures this attitude through the connection each makes between blindness and visual art.[449] Taking recourse in the familiar trope whereby blindness confers insight, they all use this as a catalyst to enable the transfiguring capability of art. Kleege's first example is Raymond Carver's short story 'Cathedral' (1983). The narrator is unenthusiastic about the imminent visit of his wife's erstwhile employer, Robert, who is blind and recently widowed. His reluctance is partly because the impairment is foreign to him: 'his blindness bothered me. My idea of blindness came from the movies.'[450] It also contains an unease about the intimacy between his wife and Robert. Ten years ago, she had a temporary job as Robert's reader, and ever since then they have kept in touch

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[445] Ben-Moshe, n.pag. For a fuller discussion of Saramago's work, see section 1.4.4.
[446] Saramago, *Blindness*, p. 309.
[447] Ben-Moshe, n.pag.
[448] Saramago, *Blindness*, p. 241.
[449] Kleege, 'Dialogues'.
[450] Raymond Carver, 'Cathedral', in *Cathedral* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 196–214, p. 196.

by conversation on recorded tapes sent through the post. She has told her husband how Robert once 'touched his fingers to every part of her face', an experience so significant that she tried to express it through poetry.[451] None of this makes sense to the narrator: 'In the poem, she talked about what she had felt at the time, about what had gone through her mind when the blind man touched her nose and lips. […] I didn't think much of the poem.'[452]

For the narrator, knowledge comes through sight. He is incredulous and disgusted at the thought that the blind man's wife died without her husband ever having seen her: 'It was beyond my understanding […] what a pitiful life this woman must have led. Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one.'[453]

The visit is strained and awkward for the narrator, although Robert shows no sign of discomfort. The three of them eat and drink too much and the narrator's wife falls asleep on the sofa between them. The television shows a documentary about cathedrals and the narrator tries to describe what is on the screen to Robert, but finds that the advantage of sight seems to have given him little knowledge: 'There's paintings on the walls […] You're asking me are those frescoes? […] That's a good question. I don't know.'[454] This stirs the narrator's first vestige of interest in Robert. Still defining knowledge as sight, he asks: 'Do you have any idea what a cathedral is? What they look like, that is?'[455] Although he appears to have picked up more information from the documentary's soundtrack than the narrator has, Robert asks the narrator to describe one. Even with an example on the screen in front of him, the narrator struggles with the task: 'They're really big […] They're massive. […] They're built of stone. […] In those olden days, God was an important part of everyone's life. You could tell that from their cathedral-building. I'm sorry […] but it looks like that's the best I can do for you. I'm just no good at it.'[456]

At that point, Robert asks if the narrator is religious. The narrator admits he is not, and it becomes clear that this is at the heart of his inability: 'The truth is, cathedrals don't mean anything special to me. Nothing. Cathedrals. They're

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[451] Ibid, p.197.
[452] Ibid, p. 197.
[453] Ibid, p. 200.
[454] Ibid, pp. 199–200.
[455] Ibid, p.210.
[456] Ibid, p. 211.

something to look at on late-night TV. That's all they are.'[457] Robert tells the narrator 'We'll do something. We'll draw one together.'[458] They sit on the carpet, Robert's hand over the narrator's. At first the narrator draws 'a box that looked like a house. It could have been the house that I lived in.'[459] This inadequacy seems to signify his own spiritual emptiness. Then, with Robert's encouragement, he adds spires, windows with arches, flying buttresses, great doors: 'I kept at it. I'm no artist. But I kept drawing, just the same.'[460] Closing his eyes under Robert's instruction, the narrator experiences a moment that is as personally significant as having Robert touch her face was for his wife: 'His fingers rode my fingers as my hand went over the paper. It was like nothing else in my life up to now.'[461] At that moment, Robert says: 'I think that's it. I think you got it.'[462] 'Getting it', I suggest, is not the depiction of a cathedral, but rather, a transformation within the narrator; a quasi-spiritual, cathedral-builder-like experience that Robert has enabled. This is reinforced when, told by Robert to open his eyes and take a look at what they have drawn, the narrator disobeys: 'My eyes were still closed. I was in my house, I knew that. But I didn't feel like I was inside anything. "It's really something", I said.'[463] The narrator, who previously equated knowledge with vision, has found a deeper level of understanding that has nothing to do with sight. The blind man's role is to be a catalyst for the insight that the sighted man gains.

Whereas in Carver's story shared artistic experience elicits a profound communication between blind and sighted protagonists (albeit in one direction only); in Lorrie Moore's short story 'What You Want to Do Fine' (1998), it exposes their fundamental inability to communicate. Mack, a divorced house painter, barters his services to a blind lawyer, Quilty, in exchange for representation in a legal case. The two become lovers, a new experience for Mack: 'the blind leading the straight', as Quilty quips.[464] They set off on a road trip to take in the sights, which Mack is called on to describe to Quilty. Less

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[457] Ibid, p. 212.
[458] Ibid, p. 212.
[459] Ibid, p. 213.
[460] Ibid, p. 213.
[461] Ibid, p. 214.
[462] Ibid, p. 214.
[463] Ibid, p. 214.
[464] Lorrie Moore, 'What You Want to Do Fine', in *The Collected Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 191–220, p. 195.

educated and much less quick-witted than his blind lover, Mack's attempts are inadequate:

> 'Describe the view to me,' says Quilty when they get out at the top.
> Mack looks out through the windows. 'Adequate,' he says.
> 'I said describe, not rate.'
> 'Midwestern. Aerial. Green and brown.'
> Quilty sighs. 'I don't think blind men should date deaf-mutes until the how-to book has been written.'[465]

'Deaf-mute' is used here to mean not only 'incapable of communication' but also 'incapable of understanding': sighted experience means nothing without the intelligence to shape it. As in Carver's story, the blind character is used to reiterate that seeing is not knowing. Thus, at the Art Institute in Chicago, Mack refuses to listen to the audio-description of the paintings from the headphones (as Quilty must): 'Let a blind man be described to! Mack had his own eyes.'[466] But all he sees are general impressions: 'the Halloween hues of the Lautrecs; the chalky ones of Puvis de Chavannes; the sweet finger paints of the Vuillards and Bonnards, all crowded with window light and commodes.'[467] As Kleege points out: 'Moore's terse verbal sketches of these works simulate Mack's struggle to articulate his untrained responses. He retains a general impression that somehow evokes childhood associations: Halloween, chalk, and finger-paints.' [468]

Although the story emphasises Quilty's greater intellectual ability, its narratorial sympathies lean towards Mack. As the journey progresses, Mack's dissatisfaction grows: 'He is growing tired of this, tired of them.'[469] At the Vietnam War Memorial, Quilty runs his fingers over the list of names, 'mind-numbing in its bloodless catalog of blood', while Mack prefers 'the buddy statue put up by the vets, something that wanted less to be art than to be human'.[470] Quilty sighs at this 'in a vaguely disgusted, condescending way' and insists that Mack is missing the point, triggering Mack to apologise sarcastically for being 'not such an intellectual'.[471] Quilty defuses the situation with word play: 'You're jealous because I was feeling around for other men', but Mack holds on to the importance of experience inaccessible to a blind man: his own peace-time army

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465 Ibid, p. 204.
466 Ibid, p. 199.
467 Ibid, p. 199.
468 Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 7.
469 'What You Want to Do Fine', p. 202.
470 Ibid, p. 202.
471 Ibid, p. 202.

service and how he wishes he had served in the war.[472] Gradually, Quilty's cerebral approach comes to seem more trivial than Mack's inarticulacy. Driving alongside the river in Missouri as hundreds of army vehicles gather to be shipped to a war brewing in the Gulf states, Quilty exhorts Mack to 'Smell the mud and humidity of it', but it is Mack whose response is emotionally deeper: 'He feels weary. He also feels sick of trying, tired of living and scared of dying.'[473] As Quilty's cleverness comes to seem more irrelevant, Mack begins cheating at their nightly games of Trivial Pursuit; unseen by his blind lover, he reads the answers on the back of the cards. Quilty's instincts lead him astray in other ways: he accuses Mack of ogling other men, when in fact Mack is looking at posters of missing children, which bring painfully to mind the son he has not seen since his divorce. Finally, in Memphis, Quilty's ludicrously off-the-mark jealousy leads to an argument between the two men. They reconcile, but even that is fraught with misinterpretation. Quilty and his guide-dog, anxiously making their way through a crowd, are unaware that Mack is deliberately ignoring them. Finding him at last, Quilty throws himself at Mack's feet in a melodramatic apology. The crowd claps, fulfilling Quilty's 'relentless need for applause'; but Mack knows the clapping is in fact for an exiting troupe of performing ducks.[474] The petty deceits and misunderstandings that abound between the two men are enabled by the asymmetry of Quilty's blindness and Mack's sight but, as Alison Kelly has pointed out, these also stand metaphorically for a perennial theme of Moore's: a 'fruitless questing' for stability and love in the 'difficult habitat' of American life.[475] Like the anonymous faces in the missing-child posters that Mack sees, he and Quilty are just 'two more lost boys in America'.[476] Blindness is a device used to heighten and dramatise Moore's evocation of a ubiquitous existential experience.

In Tracy Chevalier's novel *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, describing visual art to a blind man again exposes ignorance but this time it is the blind man whose response is more basic and less capable of appreciating art. Grist is a servant girl in the household of the artist Vermeer and becomes his model for the picture

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[472] Ibid, p. 202.
[473] Ibid, p. 207.
[474] Ibid, p. 221.
[475] Alison Kelly, *Understanding Lorrie Moore (Understanding Contemporary American Literature)*, ed. by Linda Wagner-Martin (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2009), p. 131.
[476] 'What You Want to Do Fine', p. 214.

in the title. Throughout the novel, she describes the artist's methods and work to her father, a former tile-painter who was blinded in a kiln accident. Grist tries to explain to him the complexity and subtlety of Vermeer's work: 'When you look at the cap long enough […] you see that he has not really painted it white, but blue, and violet, and yellow.'[477] Her father, more occupied with his suspicions about the growing intimacy between his daughter and her master, grumbles: 'Tile-painting is much simpler. […] You use blue and that's all. A dark blue for the outlines, a light blue for the shadows. Blue is blue.'[478] Grist is frustrated: 'I wanted him to understand that white was not simply white. It was a lesson my master had taught me.'[479] Through these dialogues with her blind father, Grist enhances her own artistic sensibilities and, therefore, her separation ('shift of allegiance', as Kleege calls it) from him to her master, Vermeer.[480] It is not only Grist, however, who is receiving an education, of course, but also the reader. As Kleege notes: 'It is clear that Chevalier finds blindness a useful device to create and repeat lavish verbal descriptions of the work in question.'[481]

So useful, in fact, that she repeats the narrative method in her subsequent novel, *The Lady and the Unicorn*. Here, Aliénor is the blind daughter of a Belgian weaver who has been employed to make six tapestries; five of which represent the senses (taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell) and one whose meaning is more obscure. Aliénor exhaustively questions Nicolas, the haughty Parisian artist on whose designs the tapestries are based:

> "In more detail now. Where is the Lady looking — at the unicorn or at the lion? What is she wearing? Is she happy or sad? Does she feel safe in her garden? What is the lion doing? Is the unicorn sitting or standing? Is he glad to be caught or does he want to get away? Does the Lady love the unicorn?"[482]

This forces the artist to sharpen his ideas. Later, he uses Aliénor's face for the Lady as she holds up the mirror in the 'sight' tapestry; Kleege speculates that this is 'perhaps a tribute to the ways she has altered his own vision'.[483] Although Aliénor is a more central character than was Grist's father, she is nevertheless equally a plot device, an extrusion of her own blindness, whose primary purpose is to form a bridge of words between painting and reader. The insistence of both

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[477] Tracy Chevalier, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (New York: Plume, 1999), p. 90.
[478] Ibid, p. 90.
[479] Ibid, p. 90.
[480] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 9.
[481] Ibid, p. 9.
[482] Tracy Chevalier, *The Lady and the Unicorn* (New York: Dutton, 2004), p. 96.
[483] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 11.

blind characters on eliciting an artificial recreation of 'seeing' is, as Kleege elsewhere notes, a common cultural theme:

> It may well be that in every depiction of a blind person there is some occasion when sighted people are called upon to describe or explain some visual phenomenon. In films, these scenes help highlight the pathos and dependence of the blind character. There is often a kind of plea, the blind person hungrily begging for some verbal description.[484]

It is also a misconceived theme, used to facilitate narration, as Chevalier's novels exemplify; or to accentuate a trope of helplessness, as Kleege suggests. Robert, Quilty, Grist's father and Aliénor, all so busily demanding descriptions of visual art, are not blind people; they are distortions of 'normalcy', brought into being in order to reflect back to the reader an ocularcentric perception of the world. This attitude is given perhaps its clearest expression in the final novel that Kleege discusses: Paul Auster's *Moon Palace*.[485] Here, the young narrator Fogg, a would-be writer, is hired by an elderly blind man Effing and trained to give economical, effective descriptions of all that he sees. At first irritated by the task, Fogg is led through a journey of personal enlightenment which releases his literary skills, suggesting, as Kleege says, 'that the job of the writer is to create images out of words, to make a world visible to a reader who cannot see it'.[486] In all these works, Kleege concludes, 'blind characters hold up a mirror in which the reader can see herself'.[487] 'Blindness' is a mechanism through which the (implicitly sighted) reader's own self-knowledge is challenged and refined.

### 1.5.7 Summarising the synthesis

Together, Panara and Jernigan categorise fifteen different ways in which deaf and blind characters have been represented in literature. By treating these characterisations as the products of determining attitudes that cross-cut literature and life alike, I have resolved them into four attitudinal groupings. Using blindness and deafness to signify existential concerns has swamped the personal meaning of people with sensory losses. This depersonalisation paves the way for further objectification as blind and deaf people are subjected to moral judgment. Figured as the most extreme form of Otherness, they are denied agency or respect, and are repurposed into lesser distortions of 'normalcy' for

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[484] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 6.
[485] Paul Auster, *Moon Palace* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004).
[486] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 12.
[487] Kleege, 'Dialogues', p. 14.

the edification of an unthinkingly ocularcentric and audist society. I reiterate the importance of seeing these four attitudes as an interrelated, overlapping web, working together to reinforce the negation of the disabled self. A single work of literature is likely to express several, if not all, of these attitudes, just as it may well exhibit characterisations which exemplify several of Panara's and Jernigan's categories. I suggest that this attitudinal model should be used not for the mere purpose of condemning or praising texts for adhering to, or diverging from, the attitudes identified. Rather, it is intended to be a springboard from which to move on to a deeper understanding of how and why such attitudes prevail, in order to mount a more formidable challenge to the sway that they hold.

**Figure 1.5.7: Negation of the Disabled Self: the overlapping attitudes of oppression**

Objectifying by moral judgment

Swamping personal meaning

Denying agency and respect

Distorting into a mirror of normalcy
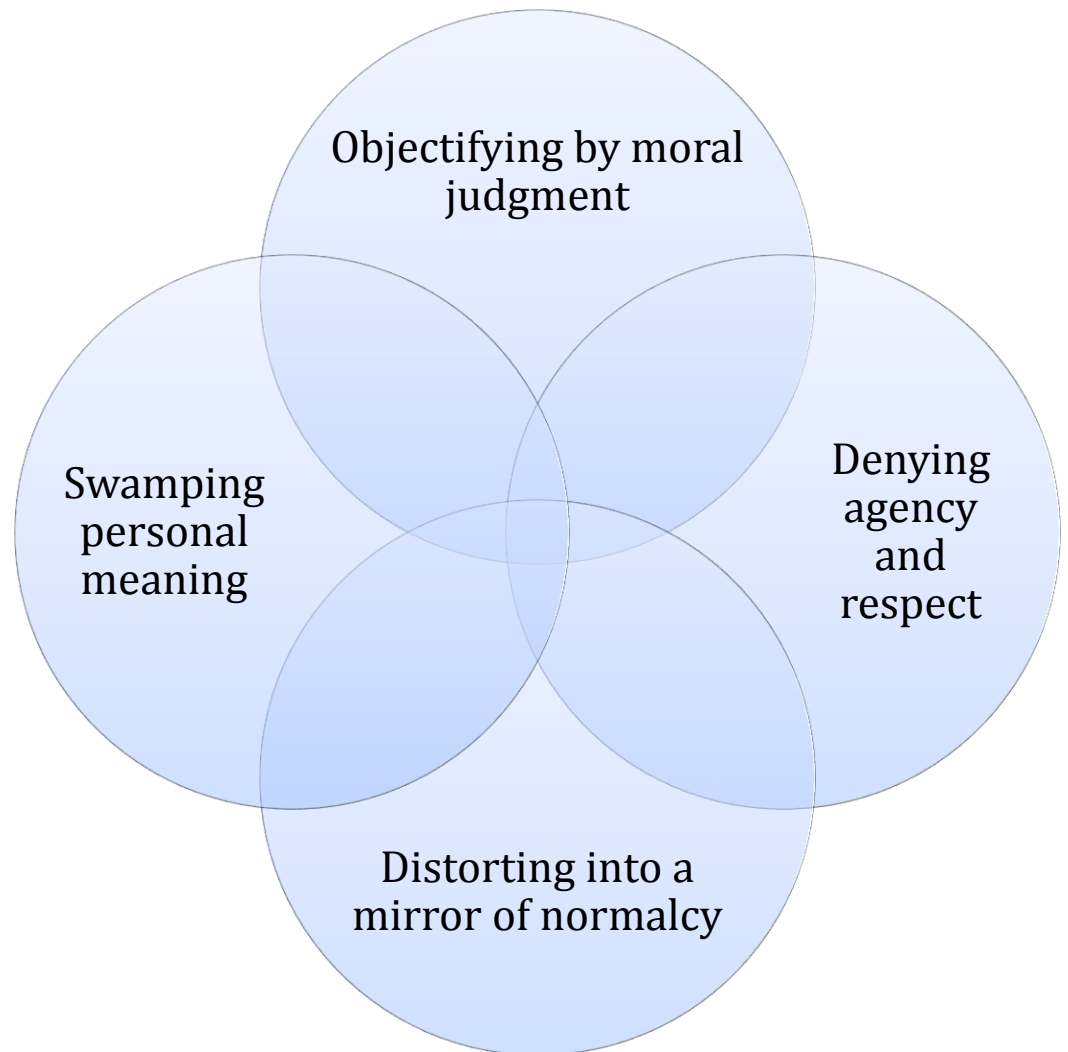
## 1.6 Absorbing the metaphor: sensory loss in memoir

If fiction has failed to produce a realistic image of sensory loss, then autobiography might be expected to do better. There is certainly no shortage of material. An example is provided by Tom Sullivan's well-known memoir *If You Could See What I Hear*, which describes the author's journey from his premature birth (when he was inadvertently blinded by an oxygen-enriched incubator) to his manhood as successful Harvard scholar, professional musician, US national wrestling title-holder, and happy husband and father.

The book describes his lowest points of despair: 'I'm just a goddamned blind kid […] I thought I could fight my way out of the snake pit of blindness, but now I know that I can't. I'm gonna have to spend the rest of my life weaving baskets or whatever'.[488] It outlines his acquisition of an unusual gift: '"facial vision", the rare and priceless attribute that very few blind possess […] [similar to] […] the natural radar of a bat or porpoise',[489] which allows him to navigate unseen obstacles. Triumphantly, it records the astonishing feats, such as saving his daughter from drowning, guided only by the sound of air bubbling from her lungs, that lead towards his final realisation 'we who are handicapped, who are most severely challenged, are given blessings and the chance of winning treasure denied those many without physical handicaps'.[490]

It is with no disrespect to Sullivan as a man of achievement that I say that this style of memoir digs no deeper into the reality of sensory loss than the heavily metaphoricised fiction already examined. It is a story with a myth-like narrative arc of blight-to-blessing that stems from an attitude whereby sensory loss swamps all personal meaning, and thus it belongs within two of Jernigan's categories of blindness: 'total tragedy' and 'miracle or divine compensation'. For these reasons, Sullivan's work fits into a genre of disability-as-autobiography that Thomas Couser has identified as a 'rhetoric of triumph, in which individuals narrate their success in overcoming adversity'.[491] Couser points out that this type of narrative does little to challenge cultural assumptions about disability, and

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[488] Tom Sullivan and Derek Gill, *If You Could See What I Hear* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). pp. 91–92.
[489] Ibid, p. 67.
[490] Ibid, p. 182.
[491] Thomas G. Couser, 'Signifying Bodies: Life Writing and Disability Studies', in *Disability Studies. Enabling the Humanities,* ed. by Snyder et al., pp. 109–17, p. 113.

'tends, at best, to remove stigma from the autobiographer, leaving it in place for others; that is, it reinforces the idea of disability as primarily misfortune'.[492]

People with impairments are no less likely than those without them to absorb the deeply embedded attitudes that construct our ideas of disability. The painful psychical divide that this creates between one's understanding of disability and a fundamental feeling that this absolutely does not describe oneself may thus lead the disabled writer to pull themselves out of the 'disabled' category in a manner which submerges other disabled people all the more firmly within it. Whereas Jernigan described Milton as 'betrayed by the forces of literature and tradition', I suggest that Sullivan and others like him have been betrayed by the forces of self-preservation into following the insidious temptation to shore up their own self-esteem and standing in society at the expense of others around them. Couser notes: 'Disabled bodies have long been cultural signifiers whose meaning has been largely determine by nondisabled people'.[493] Sullivan, like other disabled writers before and since, has absorbed the implicit values of 'normalcy'.

Such autobiographies let the 'normal' world look on with pity and admiration at the achievements of a person with a disability. Yet they do not probe into what a sensory disability really entails, any more than donning a blindfold or inserting earplugs can give someone a meaningful appreciation of life as a blind or deaf person. Through the manifold expressions of the attitudes towards sensory loss already discussed, both fiction and autobiography tell the assumed 'normal' reader that disability is a lesser form of reality than the reader's own. The disabled characters in these texts are like the shadows flickering on the wall of Plato's cave; they deflect the reader's view towards another, more vivid, meaning.[494]

In recent decades, the rapidly developing field of disability studies has promoted a redefinition of disability. Academic and disability rights activist Michael Oliver summarises the starting point: 'almost all studies of disability have a grand theory underpinning them. That grand theory can be characterised as

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[492] Ibid, p. 113.
[493] Ibid, p. 117.
[494] Plato's allegory of the cave describes prisoners chained in a deep cave since childhood. Behind them, people carry statues of animals and plants across a walkway, but the prisoners can see only the shadows of these objects reflected by firelight on the cave wall in front of them. The only reality the prisoners know is these shadows. *The Republic*, 7 (514a–520a).

'the personal tragedy theory of disability'.[495] This 'grand theory', which frames disability as a medical issue that tragically prevents an individual from leading a 'normal' life, is widely known as the 'medical model' of disability. Paul Abberley, a disabled sociologist, explains: 'The traditional approach, often referred to as the medical model, locates the source of disability in the individual's supposed deficiency and her or his personal incapacities when compared to 'normal' people'.[496] This personal tragedy theory or medical model from the field of sociology is informed by the same underlying attitudes that we have observed in fictional representations of sensory loss. The focus is on 'normal society', and the disabled individual is a depersonalised symbol of the gap between their incapacity and the 'normal' state.

As noted earlier, an alternative to the medical model, presented by disability theorists, is to aver that disabled people should not be considered to lack abilities that 'normal' people possess, but that instead society should recognise the disabling cultural barriers that militate against people to different degrees. Abberley explains this newer sociological approach: 'In contrast to this [medical model], social models see disability as resulting from society's failure to adapt to the needs of impaired people'.[497] By focusing on the failure of 'normal' society to accommodate the impaired, the social model changes the terms of the debate. Under this definition of disability it is harder to wield the 'affliction' of sensory loss for symbolic effect. If Saramago's 'white evil' blinds everyone in his fictional society, then that society must adapt — not disintegrate — and do things in a different way. If Buddy, Salinger's protagonist, cannot speak to the 'deaf-mute' uncle and be understood, he should learn Sign or write information down. The gap between 'able' and 'disabled' becomes a matter of practicalities to be resolved, not a yawning chasm of ineradicable difference.

However, although the social model of disability was launched in the 1980s, fiction writers, as we have seen, largely remain dependent on the familiar tropes. Laudable as the aim may be, the reality of shifting public perceptions from a medical model to a social model of disability is not straightforward. The contemporary philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has suggested why this may be:

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[495] Michael Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 1.
[496] Paul Abberley, 'The Spectre at the Feast: Disabled People and Social Theory', in *The Disability Reader*, ed. by Tom Shakespeare (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 79–93, p. 79.
[497] Ibid, p. 79.

> The habits of mind that have been apt to obscure the significance of the facts of affliction and dependence […] are not only widely shared but genuinely difficult to discard. They are […] part of a mindset […] from the wider culture […] [with the effect that] we will be likely to think in terms that may prevent us from understanding just how much of a change in standpoint is needed.[498]

Applying MacIntyre's point to sensory loss in particular shows that our cultural history of understanding it in symbolic terms makes it difficult to undertake the mental shift of engaging with it in a more pragmatic way. However, the social model also presents an obstacle of its own. To construct a fully-embodied understanding of the impaired experience, one must recognise that impairments have physical effects that are not of themselves constituted by social oppression. Tom Shakespeare's controversial critique of the social model, discussed further in the appendix to this thesis, rewrites disability as neither a medical deficit nor a cultural construction but as an interaction of the two.[499] Defining impairment as a 'predicament' which presents difficulties for the impaired person that are separate to those created by social attitudes, he proposes an 'interactional' model that takes into account the different effects produced by the wide variation of impairments and contexts.[500] Elements of Shakespeare's argument have been criticised for returning to the reductiveness of the medicalised individual-deficit approach.[501] Nevertheless, he raises an important issue; that the physicality of impairment should not be ignored. Building on this, I suggest that Shakespeare's 'predicament' of impairment should be viewed as more than 'limitation'. When considered as part of the diversity of human interaction with the world (rather than as essentialised deficit), the phenomenology of impairment is astonishingly complex and repays study on its own terms.

A quite different strain of memoir from Sullivan's has offered just such a phenomenological approach. Writers and academics such as John Hull and Georgina Kleege have examined their own experiences of sight loss with subtlety and depth. Hull, then a professor at Birmingham University, lost the last remnants of his sight in his forties after a lifetime of eye problems. Kleege, a

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[498] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues (Paul Carus Lectures)* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), p. 4.
[499] Appendix A, section A.5.
[500] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 84–85.
[501] For example, by Bill Hughes, who believes that this 'gives way to a reductionist argument from nature in which the natural, biological aspects of the body are credited with essential efficacy'. 'Being Disabled: Towards a Critical Ontology of Disability Studies', *Disability & Society*, 22, 7 (2007), 673–84, p. 679.

lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, retains some peripheral vision but no central vision and describes herself as legally blind since the age of eleven.[502] Both have written memoirs that reject the symbolic narrative arc in favour of a series of meditations on the effects and meanings of blindness. I will compare extracts from each book to show how the writers analyse the physical effects of their vision loss in order to reach a more complex philosophical understanding of the ways in which both blind and sighted people relate to one another.

First, in *Touching the Rock*, Hull dissects the way in which people get to know each other:

> When a sighted person makes a new acquaintance, sight alone enables him/her to form certain impressions and to get ready to meet a certain kind of person. The new acquaintance may strike one as being wise, friendly, remote, dignified, bewildered, and so on. The blind person, on the other hand, does not know what he is meeting. To say that this removes the possibility of facile first impressions is itself facile. The first impressions which the blind person does receive of a new acquaintance, of the voice, the touch of the hand and so on, may be equally misleading, and if one followed the strange logic which tells us it is better to be without any information that might mislead us, we could conclude that we would be better off with no information at all. We are constantly forming hypotheses about a new acquaintance, not only during the first few moments of the encounter but throughout the years of that relationship. The blind person simply has a lot less information to go on when forming these hypotheses. One of the results is that it takes a blind person longer to get to know somebody. That, at any rate, is my experience. […] Sighted people get to know each other by recognizing each other's appearance, and all the things this new acquaintance has said or done are associated with that image of what he or she looks like. […] For me, knowing someone hangs upon knowing the name. […] Not until I heard the voice and felt the hand clasp which would, from now on, be associated with that name, did I form much of an expectation. Around the name I would build up the story of that person. […] Sight enables one to take a cross-section through somebody's life at the present moment. The blind person, however, takes a longitudinal section, back through time. This is not only a longer view of a person's life, but takes longer to acquire.[503]

Meanwhile, in *Sight Unseen*, Kleege interrogates the experience of eye contact:

It has been more than a quarter of a century since I could make eye-contact, and I have no memory of what it feels like. […] I question sighted people about the phenomenon but what they tell me is often confusing. […]. The problem with my picture is that I focus too much on peripheral details — the posture of the body, the arrangement of the limbs, the twitching and stretching of facial muscles — and too little on the eyes themselves. When the sighted describe facial expressions, the eyes are more central and more active. Eyes glow, twinkle, sparkle, shimmer, smoulder, and flicker, projecting emotions the viewer readily understands. But what I know about the visual system tells me that the eyes cannot do all this. They receive and respond to light but cannot emit it. The 'flash of recognition' or 'spark of understanding' the teacher sees in his student's eyes is merely a trick of lighting. The lids rise, in wonder and surprise, exposing more of the slick surface of the eyeball to reflect light back to the beholder. Illumination. The downcast eye beneath half-lowered lids cannot catch and throw back the light and so seems dull and unenlightened. The eyes themselves are passive. Without the context of the mobile face around them and the play of light upon them, they remain unchanging and vacant. But in the language of the sighted, where seeing is believing, the eyes must be the focal point of every expression. All the wrinkles and crinkles of emotion occur only to funnel meaning into the eyes. […] I worry that the sighted delude themselves and put themselves at risk. Because when most of them look into my eyes they see me as sighted. If eye contact matters so much, surely it should be harder to fake. Perhaps it is only the expectations of the sighted. When I aim my eyes in more or less the right direction, the sighted see it as close enough. But if a mere millimetre could make an inquiring look into a menacing stare, shouldn't my fraud be immediately obvious? Be honest. Look at me when I'm talking to you. Do you really see all that you say? Or is it a convenience of language to ascribe to my eyes those qualities, emotions, messages you derive from the rest of my face, our surroundings, or the words I speak? Aren't you projecting your own expectations, interpretations, or desires onto my blank eyes? And if you're really being honest, really looking closely, my eyes are no more vacant than a sighted person's eyes. My eyes and your eyes send back only reflections. […] Go ahead. Take a good look. Pull the wool off your eyes. Tell me what you see.[504]

These two perceptive extracts force the reader to reconsider everyday experiences such as becoming acquainted with someone, or catching a stranger's eye. Our assumptions about the phenomenology of these activities are shaken. There is an implicit challenge to fiction writers here: how could such structural differences in perception be conveyed through narrative? If the experience of those with sensory impairments is ever to be more effectively portrayed, then answers must be found.

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[504] Georgina Kleege, *Sight Unseen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). pp. 126–28.

**1.7 Sensory loss as phenomenological exploration in fiction**

A small body of fiction can be identified which attempts a phenomenological exploration of sensory loss, investigating its physical and sociocultural effects. Taking a selection of such works, I will discuss their portrayals, form judgements on the extent of their success, and identify the obstacles that they face.

**1.7.1 The descriptive approach: David Lodge, *Deaf Sentence* and Frances Itani, *Deafening***

Two contemporary writers who have made critically acclaimed efforts to describe the experience of deafness are David Lodge and Frances Itani. Both come from a position of familiarity with deafness: Lodge became aware of his gradual-onset high-frequency hearing loss in his late forties,[505] while Itani grew up 'with a deaf grandmother among a large, extended family of expert lip-readers' and learned Sign as part of her research for the novel.[506]

Lodge's 2008 novel *Deaf Sentence* tells the story of Professor Desmond Bates, who has a similar form of deafness to Lodge himself. Now in his mid-sixties, Desmond has been forced by the difficulties of coping with his deafness to retire from his academic career. At the same time, his wife Fred (short for Winifred), who was formerly a mature student of Desmond's, has a blossoming new career in interior design. Both the inconvenience of Desmond's deafness and the power-shift it has caused in their relationship are creating tension between the couple. Muddling through a conversation at a noisy party, Desmond inadvertently agrees to mentor Alex Loom, an attractive but unhinged American graduate student. This leads him to the verge of a sexual relationship, but he draws back and thereby averts the marital and personal ruin that threatens to follow.

As the punning title of the book indicates, the easily confused, because easily misheard (and mis-lip-read) words 'death' and 'deaf' are central. The theme of death is interwoven with the story of Desmond's deafness: the memory of the painful and drawn-out death of his first wife; the physical and mental deterioration and eventual death of his elderly father (who is also somewhat deaf); Alex Loom's PhD research into the stylistics of suicide notes; and

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[505] 'Living Under a Deaf Sentence', David Lodge, *Sunday Times* (20 Apr., 2008).
[506] 'Getting it Right', Anita Lahey, *Interview with Frances Itani, Quill and Quire Author Profile* July 2003, *http://www.quillandquire.com/authors/getting-it-right/*> [accessed 28 February 2016*]

Desmond's journey to Auschwitz and Birkenau during his lecture trip to Poland. This interlinking of 'deaf' and 'death' reveals a narratorial standpoint which is, for most of the novel, firmly in the 'deafness as total tragedy' camp: 'Deafness is a kind of pre-death, a drawn-out introduction to the long silence into which we will all eventually lapse [...] [via] stages of auricular decay, like a long staircase leading down into the grave'.[507]

However, this gloomy sentiment is leavened by Desmond's gradual realisation that deafness is a lesser evil than death. This begins when Alex badgers Desmond to write a pseudo suicide ('pseudicide') note for her research. He considers what he would say and fails to find his advancing hearing loss a sufficient reason: 'as I drafted the note its insincerity showed in every word [...] it wouldn't be utterly unbearable. There would still be some pleasures left, and no pain'.[508] It climaxes during his lecture trip, when he finds himself the last visitor left at Birkenau, with a flickering candle flame in the growing darkness as 'the only sign of life in the landscape of death'.[509] Faced with such enormity, he gains perspective on his deafness. This is enhanced when he returns to his hotel to discover that back in England his baby grandson has been born and his elderly father has been hospitalised. He flies back immediately and when he and his wife see each other the trivial irritations and misunderstandings caused by his deafness seem unimportant. Their communication is more fundamental: 'we hugged and kissed speechlessly for a minute or two'.[510] As the novel ends, Desmond concludes: 'Better to dwell on life, and try to value the passing time' and returns to his lip-reading class where 'I always learn something new'.[511]

Thus, *Deaf Sentence* apparently takes deafness as a metaphor for tragedy and turns it into an aspect of life, to be integrated into the wholeness of existence. Nevertheless, I posit that this conclusion is only partially convincing, much in the way that the 'and they lived happily ever after' conclusion of a romance does not make it a story about being happily married. We see Desmond reach this verdict, but we do not move on to see his day-to-day existence less troubled by the difficulties of his hearing loss.

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[507] David Lodge, *Deaf Sentence* (London: Random House, 2008), p. 19.
[508] Ibid, p. 152.
[509] Ibid, p. 256.
[510] Ibid, p. 264.
[511] Ibid, p. 263.

This is a structural problem which Canadian writer Itani also comes up against in her prize-winning novel *Deafening*.[512] Born in 1896, seven-year-old Grania O'Neill has been totally deafened by scarlet fever. The novel describes her childhood in Deseronto, a small Canadian town, and her girlhood at a school for the deaf in Belleville. It then becomes a love story, entwining her narrative with that of her newly-wed husband Jim, a hearing man who joins up as a stretcher-bearer in World War I; until the two are reunited in 1919 to begin their life together. As a deaf person in a hearing world, Grania experiences blinkered social attitudes and struggles with communication, and both these facts are constantly foregrounded in the novel. Yet, by contrast, Grania's interaction with Jim (who learns some signs but is not a fluent Signer) is remarkably fluid and easy. Since they are separated by the war shortly after their marriage, there is no opportunity to see this idealistic relationship tested. As with Desmond and Fred, one is left wondering what will happen after the book's end. The language of love can only carry a couple so far.

Both books work hard at producing a detailed representation of the everyday difficulties of deaf existence; so hard, in fact, that they struggle (rather like their deaf protagonists) to get beyond this. Donna McDonald has criticised both Itani's novel ('obsessively melancholy') and Lodge's ('a one-note song of self-pity') specifically because of their unrelenting focus on deafness.[513] She makes the important point that this turns deafness into an over-emphasised determinant of the protagonists' lives: 'Itani's novel portrays Grania's deafness as an all-consuming shaper of her personality, a shadow that falls across her whole life. This has the effect of cannibalizing Grania — without her deafness, she would be an empty vessel'.[514] In support, McDonald draws upon poet Christopher Heuer, who has mused upon the role of deafness in his own experience of turning life into fiction:

> As we approach the task of relating and reliving the tensions of a D/deaf life through the craft of storytelling, does deafness *become* the central conflict, or does deafness instead become merely one *component* of it? Or does it perhaps become some mixture of the two?[515]

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[512] Frances Itani, *Deafening* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004).

[513] Donna M. McDonald, 'Not Silent, Invisible: Literature's Chance Encounters with Deaf Heroes and Heroines', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 154, 5 (Winter 2010), 463–70, p. 469.

[514] Ibid, pp. 469, 466.

[515] Christopher Jon Heuer, 'Deafness as Conflict and Conflict Component', *Sign Language Studies*, 7, 2 (2007), 195–99, p. 196.

Heuer concludes that the different elements of an individual's life 'influence and shape each other' such that the storytelling intent should be:

> to leave the reader with the understanding that the experience of deafness is so unique for each individual and is molded to such an extent by all the other forces operating in a person's life that, if one were to remove these other forces and components, the experience of deafness alone would be that of a vacuum.[516]

As McDonald complains, narratives like Lodge's or Itani's risk falling into the trap of attempting 'to understand people's lives exclusively through the lens of their particular disability, as if nothing else in their existence had any meaning, influence, or significance in regard to how their lives panned out'.[517]

Extending McDonald's argument, I suggest that this problem is not only created by the narrative focus and structural arc of these novels, but that their stylistic choices make an equal contribution. In the title of this section, I have identified Lodge and Itani's styles as 'descriptive'. By this, I partly mean that they emphasise a naturalistic, explanatory portrayal of activities such as undergoing an audiogram test and replacing a hearing aid battery (Lodge), or learning to articulate unheard sounds and to sign (Itani). This could be described as an anthropological method, and can also be seen in works of ethnic or historical fiction which deliberately foreground descriptions of customs, food or clothing that might be ordinary to the fictional characters but will be unfamiliar to a majority of readers. Such close attention will have various effects upon readers, depending on their own hearing status and experience. Some deaf readers may feel a rare sense of recognition on seeing their own activities represented, and some hearing readers may receive an education on matters with which they are unfamiliar. Thus, the 'descriptive' style can be considered both didactic and inclusive, neither of which outcomes are unworthy. However, a corollary of these effects is that they produce a particular meaning of deafness; one which is limiting. The sensory loss is situated as a topic of enquiry, not a way of experiencing the world; as a subject rather than a lens. As I shall now explain, this problem becomes most acute in an area that is of critical importance: communication — not only between deaf protagonist and hearing characters but also between text and reader.

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[516] Ibid, p. 199.
[517] McDonald, p. 467.

Early in *Deaf Sentence*, Desmond is driven home from a party by his wife Fred. They have a casual conversation which is shown twice, once in terms of the information that is exchanged, and then again in unedited form:

> 'Who was that young blonde you were deep in conversation with?' Fred asked me in the car on the way home. She was driving because she hadn't had much to drink and I had had quite a lot.
> 'I've no idea,' I said. 'She told me her name, twice in fact, but I couldn't make it out. I didn't hear a word she was saying. The noise...'
> 'It's all the concrete — it makes the sound reverberate.'
> 'I thought she might be one of your customers.'
> 'No, I've never seen her before. What did you think of the exhibition?'
> 'Drab. Boring. Anybody with a digital camera could take those pictures. But why bother?'
> 'I thought they had a kind of interesting ... sadness.'
> That is a condensed account of our conversation, which actually went something like this:
> 'Who was that young woman you were deep in conversation with?'
> 'What?'
> 'You were deep in conversation with a young blonde.'
> 'I didn't see Ron. Was he there?'
> 'Not Ron. The blonde woman you were talking to, who was she?'
> 'Oh. I've no idea. She told me her name, twice in fact, but I couldn't make it out. I didn't hear a word she was saying. The noise ...'
> 'It's all the concrete.'
> 'There's nothing wrong with the heating, in fact it's always too bloody hot for my liking.'
> 'No, concrete. The walls, the floor. It makes the sound reverberate.'
> 'Oh ...'
> (Pause.)
> 'What did you think of the exhibition?'
> 'I thought she might be one of your customers.'
> 'Who?'
> 'The young blonde woman.'
> 'Oh. No. I've never seen her before. What did you think of the exhibition?'
> 'What?'
> 'The exhibition — what did you think?'
> 'Drab, boring. Anyone with a digital camera could take those pictures.'
> 'I thought they had a kind of interesting ... sadness.'
> 'Can badness be interesting?'
> 'Sadness, an interesting sadness. Are you wearing your hearing aid, darling?'[518]

The contrasting versions of the conversation between Desmond and Fred (one edited to remove redundancies and misunderstandings, the other allowing them to stand) is an effective way of showing the reader how laborious and frustrating, for both parties, marital communication has become as a result of their difficulties dealing with Desmond's hearing loss. But it is not a method that can be carried on throughout the book without being tedious for the reader, and

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[518] *Deaf Sentence*, p. 7.

therefore, having made his point, Lodge generally displays the 'edited' version of conversations from then on, only flagging up Desmond's mis-hearings when appropriate to the plot, or to remind us that they still exist.

Since Grania is totally deaf, Itani has a different form of communication to represent. Research has enabled her to show the various visual cues which Grania uses to enhance her understanding of what is being said: '"Every day we will choose a page and you will learn the words under the picture. Yes?" Eyebrows up. A question'.[519] Here, Mamo (Grania's grandmother) is speaking, and Grania is lip-reading, using the cue of the raised eyebrows (rather than rising intonation) to identify the utterance as a question. Another example of Grania using visual prompts comes a few pages later, again between Mamo and Grania:

> 'Since you were a tiny baby, you've seen what's around you. As soon as you could raise your head, you peered up over the side of your cradle.'
> She laughs, thinking of this.
> Grania knows when Mamo is talking about baby times. She can tell from the softening in Mamo's face.[520]

There is an important clue for the reader in this second example, which is easily missed. Although this section is largely told from Grania's point of view, her lip-reading ability has not enabled her to comprehend all that Mamo has said. She has got the gist — that Mamo is talking of 'baby times' — but not the complete sense. The reader has been told more. This is a recurrent feature. When Mamo tells Grania that she needs to go to a special school for the deaf, Grania misunderstands the subsequent conversation:

> 'Would I have to sit still? Like in Deseronto school? At my desk?'
> 'I don't suppose your feet will get pins and needles.'
> Did she see the lips correctly? Pins and needles?
> If at special school they put pins and needles in the children's feet, she will never go.[521]

Such confusion is a constant feature of Grania's childhood. It is perceptive: the limitations on Grania's communication mean that she misses out on contextual information. In particular, she finds it harder to pick up colloquial phrases than would a hearing child. However, the foregrounding of such misunderstandings (often based on the limitations of lip-reading — only a minority of sounds can be distinguished visually) disappears from the narrative as the book progresses.

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[519] *Deafening*, p. 4.
[520] Ibid, p. 8.
[521] Ibid, p. 46.

This makes sense in some situations (when Grania learns Sign and is communicating with other Sign users, for example), but in others it is done (as in Lodge's novel) to provide a smooth reading experience.

In this way, despite their intensive focus on the fact of deafness, both *Deafening* and *Deaf Sentence* are implicitly giving a hearing-centric view of the deaf experience of communication: one which describes but does not inhabit the particularities. For the characters, the communication problems that are shown early on would in fact be a constant issue, but this is not allowed to interfere with the narrative communication between text and reader. Thus, although both books are largely told from the point of view of deaf characters, the implicit standpoint is that of a 'normalised' hearing reader, and that is an integral constraint of this 'descriptive' style. Despite Lodge's personal experience of losing his hearing, both his work and Itani's still stand firmly on the non-deaf side of what Christopher Krentz terms the 'hearing line', and are therefore 'ventriloquizing their hearing attitudes through deaf bodies'.[522] To find a way of shifting sensory loss from 'subject' to 'lens', it will be necessary to examine alternative literary techniques.

### 1.7.2 The intuitive approach: James Joyce, 'Lestrygonians', Part II, Chapter 8, and 'Proteus', Part 1, Chapter 3, of *Ulysses*

The experimental nature of modernist writing makes it a fruitful area to examine for alternative ways of displaying sensory impairment. Joyce's own visual problems are well documented, and the deterioration of his sight was particularly acute during the time he was writing *Ulysses*.[523] I suggest that a model for differentiating between description and evocation of sensory loss can be found by comparing Stephen's walk on Sandymount Strand in 'Proteus' with Bloom's encounter with the blind stripling in 'Lestrygonians'.[524] There are long-standing

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[522] Christopher Krentz, *Writing Deafness: The Hearing Line in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 199.

[523] For accounts of Joyce's eyesight, see Michael Groden, 'Joyce at Work on "Cyclops": Towards a Biography of *Ulysses*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 44, 2 (Winter 2007), 217–45, pp. 232–34; and Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce (Oxford Lives)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 28, 64, 192, 268, 308, 412–13, 417, 454, 498, 512, 517, 535–38, 540, 543, 566, 568–74, 603, 607, 613, 621–25, 627–28, 657–59, 663–64, 669, 707, 716n.

[524] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1986), pp. 31–42, 124–50.

precedents leading towards this comparison. J. Mitchell Morse has made a general link between the stripling and Stephen by pointing out their similar reluctance to accept help from Bloom (the stripling when crossing the road in 'Lestrygonians' and Stephen when threatened by drunken British soldiers in 'Circe').[525] Homing in more closely, Edwin Steinberg has specifically linked the Proteus and Lestrygonian passages. He meticulously details numerous similarities of both form and content, noting that Joyce 'added many of the items that build up the paralleling motifs in "Lestrygonians" after the manuscript of *Ulysses* had been typed', which he presents as evidence of Joyce's meaningful intent to mirror the scenes.[526] Melvin Friedman adds that 'Lestrygonians' is Bloom's 'time for contemplation just as the "Proteus" section was Stephen Dedalus'.'[527] More recently, Siân White, citing both Steinberg and Friedman, finds a new intertextual connection between the passages in the form of Coleridge's poem 'The British Stripling's War-Song'.[528] She links the poem both to the blind stripling with his cane and to Stephen with his ashplant stick-sword, determining that this 'triangulates the relationships among Bloom, Stephen, and the blind stripling'.[529] Having made the connection, however; the earlier critics seem uncertain what to do with it. Morse concludes merely that 'Bloom's relationship with the stripling foreshadows that with Stephen'.[530] In similar vein, Steinberg suggests that 'Bloom is concerned with many of the same matters that Stephen is, but […] on a much less sophisticated level'.[531] Friedman draws no conclusion at all from the parallel. White, speaking from a postcolonial vantage point, reads the connection as an elaborate metaphor that 'at once mocks blind loyalty to empire, nation, and a sense of masculine genealogy, and posits the

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[525] J. Mitchell Morse, 'Joyce and the Blind Stripling', *Modern Language Notes,* 71, 7 (Nov. 1956), pp. 497–501, p. 500.

[526] Erwin R. Steinberg, '"Lestrygonians": a Pale "Proteus"?', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 15, 1 (1969), 73–86, p. 85.

[527] Melvin J. Friedman, 'Lestrygonians', in *James Joyce's Ulysses: Critical Essays*, ed. by Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 131–46, p. 135.

[528] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The British Stripling's War-Song', in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), I, p. 317.

[529] Siân E. White, '"O, Despise Not My Youth!": Senses, Sympathy, and an Intimate Aesthetics in *Ulysses*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 51, 4 (Winter 2009), 503–36, p. 519.

[530] Morse, p. 500.

[531] Steinberg, p. 74.

youth figures as the embodiments of the potential for a new construction of masculinity and national community'.[532]

I wish to take a different approach. Rather than listing further similarities between the episodes, or reading blindness as a figurative trope, I will contrast how Joyce has chosen to present sensory impairment within each. In doing so, I embark upon the type of close reading that Derek Attridge credits with redefining Joyce in a colonialist and post-colonialist context, and apply it to the area of sensory loss. Attridge says of Joyce that before this 'page-by-page engagement with the political in his fiction […]. [w]here there was an emphasis on the ethical dimension of his work, it was more likely to be in terms of individual freedom and compassion than the politics of colonialism and anti-colonialism'.[533] I hope to show that this is also true of Joyce's engagement with issues of blindness: what critics have addressed as personal should be analysed as structural. As Attridge recognises, Vincent Cheng has shown 'how Joyce's writing both acknowledges the current potency and the miserable legacy of binary thinking in the politics of race and empire and seeks continually for ways of breaching the oppositional logic upon which such thinking relies.'[534] In an analogous manner, I suggest that Joyce both presents and undermines the logic of binary opposition in relation to sensory loss.

The encounter with the blind stripling in 'Lestrygonians' is told from Bloom's point of view, which distances and objectifies the blind youth. 'Better not do the condescending', Bloom decides, but to him blindness is so Other that he cannot avoid it: 'Slobbers his food, I suppose. [...] Poor young fellow! Quite a boy. Terrible. Really terrible. What dreams would he have, not seeing? Life a dream for him.'[535] The encounter triggers a series of meditations about sightlessness. Bloom wonders about how the boy avoids obstacles, whether smells and tastes are stronger for him, and if sexual contact has an extra intensity, all of which play to myths discussed in section 1.2: sensory loss as helplessness, as tragedy and as conferring miraculous or compensatory power. White notes the distancing effect of seeing the stripling through Bloom's eyes: 'Significantly, the episode does not give the stripling an interior voice, and so neither we nor Bloom can confirm the legitimacy of Bloom's imagination of the

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[532] White, p. 520.
[533] Derek Attridge, 'Foreword', in Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. xi–xiv, p. xii.
[534] Ibid, p. xiii.
[535] *Ulysses.* pp. 148–49.

blind man's experience'.[536] This legitimacy is not merely unconfirmed, but has been vehemently contested by David Bolt. Decrying Bloom's interpretation as yet another example of 'beneficial blindness', in other words the overly-positive stereotyping of those with impaired vision, Bolt points out that it does not matter whether stereotyping is done in a positive or negative manner: 'for either way an object position is being defined, the subject position is necessarily held by someone with unimpaired vision'.[537] Despite briefly acknowledging Bolt's position, by way of a footnote, White sweeps this point aside in order to insist that 'Bloom's ability to empathize and the accuracy of his interpretation of the blind stripling's experience are less important than his desire and openness to empathizing.'[538] One might ask, less important to whom? Not, perhaps, to the stripling himself, who shows no sign of being gladdened by the encounter. Nor to the visually impaired reader, who is certainly on the wrong side of the 'us'/'them' divide when Bloom ruminates that 'we are surprised they have any brains. [...] Pity of course: but somehow you can't cotton on to them someway'.[539] Thus, although White claims that the stripling 'evokes in Bloom […] feelings of pity and empathy', I suggest that these are in fact mutually exclusive.[540] Bloom pities the stripling, even sympathises with him, but Joyce has deliberately constructed Bloom's impressions in a socially normative way, which is to say an unempathetic one. When Bloom tries to imagine experiencing the world through other senses, he cannot let go of the predominance of sight, such as when he notices a passing girl and imagines the stripling's response:

> Must be strange not to see her. Kind of a form in his mind's eye. The voice, temperature when he touches her with fingers must almost see the lines, the curves. His hands on her hair, for instance. Say it was black, for instance. Good. We call it black. Then passing over her white skin. Different feel perhaps. Feeling of white.[541]

Bloom cannot escape his own perceptual status; he must suppose that colour has a corresponding tactile quality. Nor can he escape his deep-rooted sense of the blind youth's Otherness, and therefore, although well-meaning, his attempt to empathise cannot succeed. And in turn, we, the reader, do not and cannot empathise with the nameless stripling. Like Bloom, we may be led by this

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[536] White. p. 506.
[537] Bolt, 'Beneficial Blindness', p. 98.
[538] White. p. 507.
[539] *Ulysses.* p. 149.
[540] White, p. 505.
[541] *Ulysses.* p. 149.

encounter to think about blindness from a safe distance, but certainly not to experience it. This, I believe, strains White's conclusion when she claims that:

> while Bloom's perspective might seem limited because he privileges sight, it is because — not in spite — of that privileging that his effort to see as the blind man "sees" is such a moment of intimate selflessness. The passage must be presented from this limited rather than totalizing view in order to represent intimacy.[542]

White's desire to approve Bloom's view of the stripling may have its roots in the fact that, as Mark Wollaeger notes: 'Leopold Bloom has often been interpreted as an expression of Joyce's liberal humanism.'[543] Just as Wollaeger, in his astringent critique of some postcolonial criticism, warns that finding 'a generalized anticolonial subversiveness' in *Ulysses* 'risks obscuring the ways in which Joyce was ambivalently invested in the very forms of power he seems to subvert'; so I suggest we should avoid reading for a generalised pro-disability stance that masks a more complicated engagement.[544] As Cheng demonstrates, Bloom is 'a product of the dominant cultural discourse'.[545] Andrew Gibson concurs: 'Like all the other Bloom-centred chapters, then, "Lestrygonians" produces what is, in effect, a complex deliberation within a given set of political parameters.'[546] For this reason, as Gibson avers, Bloom can 'open up a different perspective or line of thought, but from within the horizons of the community rather than — as has so often been assumed — outside them.'[547] It should come as no surprise, then, that for all his liberal humanism, Bloom is unable to transcend the stereotypical views of the blind generally espoused in his time and ours. Much as we might want to believe that Bloom's attitude, which for many readers mirrors their own, transcends condescension, we should accept that to claim as much is to read against Joyce's text.

Redirecting Attridge's commentary, to which I referred earlier, on Joyce's engagement with issues of colonialism, I suggest that White is an example of a critic reading for displays of 'individual freedom and compassion' and thereby overlooking deeper structural elements at work. As I have shown, Bloom's

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[542] White. p. 521.

[543] Mark Wollaeger, 'Joyce and Postcolonial Theory: Analytic and Tropical Modes', in *A Companion to Joyce,* ed. by Richard Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 174–92, p. 179.

[544] Ibid. p. 178.

[545] Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and* Empire, p. 185.

[546] Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 58.

[547] Ibid, p. 58.

apparent affirmation of the stripling's blindness is entrenched in longstanding myths of tragedy, helplessness, and miraculous and compensatory powers. Bolt points out that the trope of 'beneficial blindness' is 'only beneficial to prejudiced people who wish to maintain the binary logic of "the blind" and "the sighted"'.[548] There is an analogy here with the 'binary trap' that Cheng identifies, endemic in late-nineteenth-century thinking, which produced 'a discourse racialized along a binary axis that posited the English "race" as one pole (the positive) and the Irish as the other (the negative)'.[549] As Cheng points out, arguing against such a binary pattern is a 'trap that essentializes and limits representation': 'you are judging/arguing by the same rules/categories "they" are and so you end up reifying/maintaining those categories in place as functional realities'.[550] By withholding the stripling's viewpoint, Joyce resists giving his readers the counter-argument to Bloom's misperceptions. If he did, it would inevitably be read on Bloom's terms. Instead, the patterning that links this encounter with Stephen's imagined blindness in the 'Proteus' episode offers us an entirely different engagement with sensory loss.

Here, Stephen, who has broken his glasses the day before the novel begins and is severely impaired without them (as was Joyce), is walking across Sandymount Strand. Like Bloom, he muses about the interrelation of the senses but, unlike Bloom, Stephen is himself visually impaired. Even before he shuts his eyes, he experiences objects as a blur of light and colour and shape ('Limits of the diaphane'), which he bumps into before seeing ('knocking his sconce against them').[551] Although Stephen still classes the blind as a separate category from himself ('Tap with it, they do'), he is not so distanced from them.[552] For Stephen (as, again, for Joyce himself), blindness has a more experiential quality than it does for Bloom: we see this when he closes his eyes, because the focus shifts, not as it does for Bloom to the absence of sight; but instead to a world of sound. Roger Alsop, a lecturer in music and sound design at Melbourne University, has investigated the sound world of *Ulysses*. He outlines how Joyce leads the reader towards the acoustics of the scene and, in particular, to the emotional meaning

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[548] Bolt, 'Beneficial Blindness', p. 98.
[549] Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, p. 41.
[550] Ibid, p. 45.
[551] *Ulysses*, p. 31.
[552] Ibid, p. 31.

of the sounds, as opposed to the dictionary definition of the words.[553] Alsop

discusses the ways in which the signification of a word is more than (and

sometimes different from) its lexical meaning, and how Joyce uses the acoustic

qualities of phonemes to reinforce contextual emotional meanings. Thus, Alsop

directs us to examine how Joyce uses Stephen to draw our attention to the

sound world:

> Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and
> shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A
> very short space of time through a very short time of space, Five. Six: the
> nacheinander. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the
> audible.[554]

Alsop argues that here, Joyce's use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and rhyme

recreates the sound of Stephen walking over shells; and that rhythm and rhyme

recreates the cadence of Stephen's step. He then suggests that Joyce

deliberately contrasts the auditory rhythm of Stephen's next words with their

lexical meaning. Stephen declares: 'Rhythm begins, you see. I hear. A catalectic

tetrameter of iambs marching. No, agallop: deline the mare. Open your eyes

now. I will.'[555] A catalectic verse is one with an incomplete final foot, and as

Alsop states, this verbally indicates that 'Stephen's vigorous 'stride at a time' is

faltering', yet the beat of the sentences remains strong, counterpointing the

'semantic stumble' with 'vigorous allitaration'. [556] Alsop describes this as 'an

example of the possible dichotomies between the intellectual, lexical meaning of

speech and the extra-lexical/intellectual meanings with which the listener can be

imbued.'[557]

This interplay of emotional and lexical meaning creates a possible sense-

world of the blind; a richer world than one focused on sightlessness, one that

digs into the psychological fullness of sound, conveyed through an emotionally

rich language. It is qualitatively different to a perception based on the visual

sense. Alsop draws on Walter Ong to elaborate:

> Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer
> outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer. […]

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[553] Roger Alsop, 'The Ineluctable Modality of the Audible: Exploring the Sound Worlds of James Joyce's *Ulysses*', *School of Production, Victorian College of the Arts* <http://www.acousticecologyaustralia.org/symposium2003/proceedings/papers/rAlsop.pdf> [accessed 15 March 2016]

[554] *Ulysses,* p. 31.

[555] Ibid, p. 31.

[556] Alsop, p. 5.

[557] Ibid, p. 5.

> Vision comes to a human being from one direction at a time: to look at a room or a landscape, I must move my eyes around from one part to another. When I hear, however, I gather sound simultaneously from every direction at once: I am at the center of my auditory world, which envelops me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence. […] You can immerse yourself in hearing, in sound. There is no way to immerse yourself similarly in sight.[558]

These words of Ong's elucidate the difference between the ways in which Bloom and Stephen imagine blindness. Bloom's perspective is an external one, still vision-based, which posits the blind consciousness as Other; an object of curiosity. By contrast, Stephen is at the heart of an acoustic world, truly a 'core of sensation and existence'. Perhaps playfully, Alsop suggests that when Stephen says 'Shut your eyes and see', that this is not only Stephen addressing himself, but Joyce addressing the reader, alerting us to experience that imaginative inhabitation of blindness, and opening our ears to the soundscape which is such an important feature of the novel.[559]

Thinking further about this world of sound associated with Stephen leads to a much-debated topic: whether ear or eye predominates in *Ulysses*. Maud Ellmann compares this to an internal 'struggle' within the text, as shown by the contrast between Stephen and Bloom's ways of experiencing the world:

> This critical debate re-enacts a struggle waged in Joyce's works themselves, in which the rival modalities of ear and eye are constantly competing for supremacy. In *Ulysses* this struggle is played out by Stephen and Bloom, who tend to be aligned with sound and sight respectively. Stephen's ears are sharper than his eyes, whereas Bloom takes refuge in the realm of sight.[560]

Ellmann concludes that 'Joyce's writings restage Stephen's philosophical experiment in "Proteus" by pitting the visible against the audible. The visible is the modality of space and writing, whereas the audible is the modality of time and voice'.[561] Thus, Bloom is paired with the visible modes of space and writing, while Stephen is matched with the audible modes of time and voice. This distinction may be usefully compared with a separate piece of criticism by Ellmann on Joyce and the human body. Here, she discusses Joyce's two schemes for *Ulysses*, each of which assigned bodily functions to all the chapters

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[558] Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition,* ed. by John Hartley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 71.
[559] *Ulysses.* p. 31.
[560] Maud Ellman, 'Joyce's Noises', *Modernism/modernity,* 16, 2 (Apr. 2009), 383–90, p. 383.
[561] Ibid, p. 389.

except three (the excluded chapters being the first three, told from Stephen's point of view): 'Explaining this omission, Joyce declared that Stephen, as Telemachus, '"does not yet bear a body".'[562] Putting Ellmann's separate areas of enquiry together suggests that the deeply corporeal, embodied Bloom encounters the world through visual, fleshly means; whereas the more cerebral, disembodied Stephen experiences it through audible, cognitive means. Their responses to an imagined blindness reflect this difference: Bloom, rooted in his own physicality, cannot perceive it as anything but Otherness, to be understood through his own visual frames of reference; Stephen, by contrast, enters into the centre of an acoustic world, experiencing and analysing a different mode of perception. And the reader accompanies each on their very different journeys.

However, difference does not necessarily entail absolute opposition. Lorraine Wood presents a convincing argument in favour of considering the visible and the audible in *Ulysses* as two parts of a single whole: one that begins to emerge in the 'Proteus' chapter and is brought to stylistic fruition in the 'Sirens' chapter, where language and music are fused:

> Joyce foregrounds our reading of 'Sirens' with his discussion of the visible and the audible, which he terms, respectively, *nebeneinander* and *nacheinander*, in the 'Proteus' episode of *Ulysses*. While the two principles are juxtaposed as the two different ways we perceive the world around us — simultaneously and sequentially — they are also synthesized and conflated into a larger unity. Joyce follows the phrase 'ineluctable modality of the visible' by its counterpart, the 'ineluctable modality of the audible', indicating that modality (significantly, also a musical term) is both visible (in terms of grouping letters into words, as in written language) and audible (in terms of setting words into a logical sequence, as in spoken language). Yet, as Joyce points out, each process encompasses the other within it, so that *nebeneinander* and *nacheinander* function as two 'ineluctable' halves of one whole.[563]

Wood continues:

> The clue to reading 'Sirens,' I maintain, is in the 'instruction' Joyce gives us in 'Proteus': true perception requires both the visible and the audible; they cannot be separated, for modality (in language or music) is both simultaneous and sequential, *nebeneinander* and *nacheinander*, sight and sound.[564]

So, rather than using the stripling's voice or any other as an anti-Bloom arguing against Bloomish attitudes to blindness, Joyce gives us Stephen enacting

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[562] Maud Ellman, 'The Epic of the Human Body', in *A Companion to Joyce*, ed by Richard Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 54–70, p. 56.
[563] Lorraine Wood, 'Joyce's Ineluctable Modality: (Re)Reading the Structure of "Sirens"', in *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2007, pp. 67–91, p. 68.
[564] Wood, p. 79.

blindness in an utterly different manner. In accord with Wood, I contend that *Ulysses* requires us to engage with blindness in two ways that are in fact one whole: a fleshly Othering of blindness and a cognitive entering into it. Far from being a binary opposition, these two approaches are differently valued aspects of engagement. Borrowing Wollaeger's phrase when he warns against situating Joyce in too generalised a post-colonial context, I suggest that to prioritise one of these approaches over the other 'risks obscuring the ways in which Joyce was ambivalently invested in the very forms of power he seems to subvert'.[565]

Arguing that for a long time Joyce's 'canonical status […] as a revolutionary prose innovator within a high modernist context' prevented critics from interrogating his political standpoints, Cheng asks:

> what blind spots are we today conveniently perpetuating […]? What is the 'unrecognizable' which our own cultural theories need to try to recognize? […] The actual-but-occluded risk, the 'unrecognizable' if you will, may involve having to deal with the real issues and real world consequences of our theorizing, to which we remain happily blind.[566]

Cheng's question is directed towards postcolonial analysis. But it is for more reasons than the pleasing irony of his repeated use of de Man's embedded metaphor of critical blindness with its binary opposition of sight/insight that I suggest the answer to his call should come from a disability studies perspective. Cultural ignorance and prejudice about sensory loss has prevented us from recognising the structural issues that underpin its presentation in Joyce's work; and therefore from appreciating the complexity of his response to it. I have labelled the way in which Joyce handles Stephen's imagined blindness stylistically as 'intuitive' compared to Lodge's and Itani's 'descriptive' technique. I do so because Joyce's method sets readers in a different narrative relation to the text; one which enables us to experience this form of sensory impairment through the senses, rather than objectively to know about it.

Experiencing sensory impairment can be taken to another level, however, when we consider further the ability of fiction to enter into the consciousness of a character with sensory losses (rather than a 'normal' unimpaired character imagining such losses). With this in mind, I come on to discuss a third approach that contains an extra level of narrative complication: a method which draws the reader unknowingly into the experience of sensory impairment. I have termed

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[565] Wollaeger, p. 178.

[566] Vincent J. Cheng, 'Of Canons, Colonies, and Critics: The Ethics and Politics of Postcolonial Joyce Studies', *Cultural Critique,* 35 (Winter 1996–1997), 81–104, p. 99.

this the 'oblique' approach, and it is demonstrated in the work of the experimental twentieth-century writer Henry Green.

### 1.7.3 The oblique approach: Henry Green, *Caught* and *Blindness*

On reading *Ulysses*, Henry Green commented that Joyce (and Kafka) 'have said the last word on each of the two forms they developed. There's no one to follow them. They're like cats which have licked the plate clean. You've got to dream up another dish if you're to be a writer'.[567] I suggest that an important element of Green's 'dish' was the evocation of the experience of sensory impairment; in this case, deafness. The particular 'newness' of Green's technique is that it does not foreground the fact of the impairment. In fact, readers may not even be aware that they are experiencing the fictional world as a deaf person might; and yet, in Green's 1943 novel *Caught*, this is the case.

The novel's protagonist, Richard Roe, is a wealthy Londoner who has joined the Auxiliary Fire Service during World War II (as Green himself did). A widower, Roe has left his 5-year-old son Christopher in the country under the care of Roe's sister-in-law Dy. Early in the novel, there is a flashback to Christopher's abduction from a department store by a disturbed woman. Although Christopher was soon returned, the incident has a long fuse, which is lit when Roe discovers that the woman was the sister of his immediate superior, professional fireman Bert Pye.

Also like Green himself, Roe is partially deaf. This is rarely mentioned in the narrative, and many readers may miss the information altogether. The first mention comes early on, when Roe visits his son after a separation: 'The next morning Roe went to fetch Christopher from day school. They were shy of each other. He wanted to buy him sweets but could not hear which shop the boy said was best, Christopher was so low off the ground, and he was rather deaf.'[568] Another, more ambiguous, reference appears much later, when the attractive Hilly, an upper-crust volunteer driver with the Fire Service, 'began to tease him that he did not hear a fraction of what went on at the substation'.[569] Although it is not clear whether she is referring to his hearing loss, or simply suggesting he is

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[567] Terry Southern, 'Henry Green: The Art of Fiction No 22', *Interview with Henry Green, The Paris Review,* 19 (Summer 1958), repr. in Matthew Yorke (ed), *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green* (London, Harvill, 1993), pp. 234–50, p. 247.

[568] Henry Green, *Caught* (London: Harvill, 2001), p. 2.

[569] Ibid, p. 97.

detached from the gossip, the former seems likely, especially in light of a later mention, when Roe, 'deaf as he was', is unsure whether he has correctly heard Hilly's hint that she might be interested in having sex with him.[570]

Although direct mentions of Roe's deafness are few, the experience of hearing loss permeates the novel. Indeed, the level of confusion and misunderstandings between the characters makes it seem as if everyone's hearing is affected. As Lois Bragg points out: 'mishearing is integral to the thematic and stylistic concerns' of this, and of Green's later novels.[571] She links this to the biographical fact that by the time Green was writing *Caught*, his own hearing (which had been poor in one ear from childhood) was rapidly deteriorating, causing him personal and social difficulties. Thus, in *Caught*, gossip flies round the fire station in a series of Chinese whispers, becoming increasingly distorted. Mary Howells, a cook at the station, has family problems and Pye tries to offer her unofficial leave to deal with them. The two completely misunderstand each other and Mary disappears without telling Pye, exposing him to censure by his superiors. Rumours about this ricochet about the station, as do others concerning Pye's ill-matched affair with the privileged Prudence. A fellow fireman misunderstands a comment of Roe's and believes him to be homosexual. Pye frequently refers to Roe's wife, unaware that she is dead. Hilly mixes up her gossip, leading Roe to bear a grudge and thus to spill the story of Christopher's abduction by Pye's sister, which then gets further confused. Pye himself is traumatised by the memory of his own first sexual experience, having come to suspect that he mistakenly raped his sister and thereby triggered her mental fragility. All these misunderstandings, rumours and suspicions coalesce to produce an environment in which no one knows, or can be sure of, the truth.

Oscillating between denial and doubt, Pye takes to prowling the black-out, trying to ascertain if he truly could have mistaken his sister in the dark. He ends up bringing a young boy back to the station and finds himself the subject of lurid suspicions because a story of his involvement in Christopher's abduction has spread. Unable to bear this, Pye hangs himself. We only learn of his death later, when Roe returns to his family in the country. His sister-in-law, Dy, unwilling to listen to tales of the air raid in which two of his fellow fireman were

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[570] Ibid, pp. 109–10.
[571] Lois Bragg, 'The Hard-of-Hearing and the Hardly Heard in Henry Green's Novels of the 1940s', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 26, 2 (Winter 2003), 100–12, p. 102.

killed, is puzzled when Roe breaks off to say, 'Yet I suppose it was not like that at all. One changes everything after by going over it'.[572] She interjects: 'the real thing is the picture you carry in your eye afterwards, surely? It can't be what you can't remember, can it?'[573] This question — what is real? — echoes through the novel and the answer appears to be that it is impossible to know.

Bharat Tandon picks up on this 'impossibility of knowing' in Green's work. He refers to an acerbic comment Green made during a 1950 radio talk: 'And do we know, in life, what other people are really like? I very much doubt it. We certainly do not know what other people are thinking and feeling. How then can the novelist be so sure?'[574] Green means that we cannot accurately interpret the internal processes of others from their utterances or behaviour. Tandon widens this web of misconceptions, showing that it is not just internal to the novel, but also spreads out to encompass the reader, who cannot give a definitive answer to the questions the novel raises. We readers do not know whether Pye raped his sister. We do not know if he has (as Dy seems to believe) a sexual interest in young boys. We do not know what happened to Christopher during the hours of his abduction. We cannot be sure how to interpret Roe's mood at the end of the novel. Tandon describes Green's work as 'a fictional œuvre which makes a creative virtue of wrong-footing its readers, even as it depicts the numerous ways in which its characters accidentally or deliberately wrong-foot each other'.[575]

Marina MacKay has interpreted this 'wrong-footing' as a function of memory: 'The novel insists that the past relived in all the distortions of memory is what causes the real damage.'[576] Certainly, characters rewrite events in their imaginations afterwards. However, I think it is important to notice that uncertainty at the time of the original event is equally significant. Edward Stokes notes in *Caught*: 'Green's practice of interpolating, in parentheses, omniscient comments, indicating the inadequacy of the character's reactions, or the imperfections of his

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[572] *Caught,* p. 180.
[573] Ibid*,* p. 180.
[574] Henry Green, 'A Novelist to His Readers 1', broadcast by the BBC (1950), publ. in *The Listener,* (Nov. 1950), repr. in Yorke (ed), *Surviving,* pp. 136–42, p. 139.
[575] Bharat Tandon, 'Henry Green', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Novelists,* ed. by Adrian Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 393–405, p. 393.
[576] Marina MacKay, 'The Neutrality of Henry Green', in *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 91–117. p. 100.

knowledge'.[577] Green's characters — and readers — are fundamentally uncertain of what has happened, even as it happens. This world of uncertainty about context is one which the sensory impaired negotiate every day, and I contend that it is this experience which *Caught* gives us. Green himself more than once referred to his own prose style as 'non-representational' and during his 1958 interview with writer Terry Southern, specifically linked this stylistic device with his own hearing loss:

> 'Nonrepresentational' was meant to represent a picture which was not a photograph, nor a painting on a photograph, nor, in dialogue, a tape recording. For instance, the very deaf, as I am, hear the most astounding things all round them which have not in fact been said. This enlivens my replies until, through mishearing, a new level of communication is reached. My characters misunderstand each other more than people do in real life, yet they do so less than I. Thus, when writing, I 'represent' very closely what I see (and I'm not seeing so well now) and what I hear (which is little) but I say it is 'nonrepresentational' because it is not necessarily what others see and hear.[578]

Crucially, Green makes it clear that this to-and-fro of misunderstandings is not meant to create a surreal effect, but is in fact intended to reach 'a new level of communication'. In support of this, Tandon cites a 1959 interview with Alan Ross, in which Ross asks whether Green's novels are 'non-representational alternatives to real life, or at a different level extensions of it?' and Green answers firmly: 'Oh I think they must be extensions every time'.[579] Tandon surmises that Green 'creates an art which is indeed non- representational, but manages, in its non-mimetic indirections, to engage its readers all the more creatively and emotionally with the world it isn't miming'.[580]

Thus, Tandon posits that Green's non-representational style gives the reader a more resonant emotional truth than a naturalistic style might achieve. As shown, Green considered his style to be 'non-representational' only in so far as it does not reflect the sensory experience of people with typical hearing (and sight), but it in fact approaches the representation of his own sensory-impaired understanding. For this reason, I label it an 'oblique' style. Like Joyce's 'intuitive' style, it is able to evoke an experience of sensory impairment (which Lodge's and Itani's 'descriptive' style cannot do). But Green does this without signalling

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[577] Edward Stokes, *The Novels of Henry Green* (London: Hogarth, 1959), p. 89.
[578] Southern, p. 239.
[579] Tandon, p. 403.
[580] Ibid, p. 403.

the activity to the reader and thereby achieves something truly significant: he has made the sensory-impaired position the normative one.

It is worth examining how Green developed this groundbreaking style, not least because his first novel, *Blindness,* also dealt with sensory loss but in a very different way.[581] In this work, the visual impairment was explicitly foregrounded, from the title onwards. Significantly, Green chose to narrate *Blindness* in a manner that forced him, without any personal experience to draw upon, to imagine the consciousness of a sightless person. As I will demonstrate, his success in this endeavour was limited at best. However, I will go on to suggest that the specific stylistic engagements which the attempt to understand blindness required of him actually enabled him to evolve the 'oblique' style that was later so successful in creating an implicitly hearing-impaired world in *Caught*.

Green published *Blindness* in 1926 when he was just 21 years old. The first section of the novel is a diary chronicling daily events in the life of John Haye, a precocious, literary-minded public-schoolboy. This finishes with a letter between two of his schoolmates revealing that, in a pointless accident (a child throwing a stone through a train window), John has been blinded. The second section, written in the third person, flicks between various points of view (John's, his stepmother's, his old Nanny's, his nurse's) as John, now living on his family's country estate, adjusts to his blindness and has a love affair with a local girl, the daughter of the disgraced former parson. In the final section, John and his stepmother make a momentous move to London, fulfilling a long-held ambition of John's. The move proves disappointing in various ways but concludes with a strange epiphany for John, and the novel ends with a letter from him to a friend proclaiming his resulting great happiness.

At first glance, as Barbara Brothers has shown, the novel appears to be structured as a *Künstlerroman* narrating John's growth to artistic maturity: an impression reinforced by the section headings ('Caterpillar', 'Chrysalis', 'Butterfly'). John learns to cope with his new disability, develops a deeper artistic vision in compensation, and has a final transformative epiphany after which he will be able to express his latent literary talent. So far, so clichéd. Yet, to subscribe wholeheartedly to this reading is to ignore many contradictory indications within the text. Brothers summarises:

> Their readings, however, seem to me 'blind' in the same sense that
> *Blindness* demonstrates all interpretations are 'blind'; their interpretations

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[581] Henry Green, *Blindness* (London: Hogarth, 1977).

are presented as 'privileged' readings. [...] Because of the ironic questioning of sign and meaning that recurs throughout the novel, readers must remain unsure if, in asserting that John has come through his spiritual initiation or any other statement of thematic development, they have not imposed rather than discovered the schema of the novel.[582]

Coming from a reader-response standpoint, Brothers interrogates the highly formal patterning of the novel, with its repeated dramatisation of characters' individualised perception of events. The juxtaposition of John's point of view with others is used to point out (often to comic effect) how each character constructs meanings that are specific to themselves, seemingly 'blind' to the differing understandings that others form. This is highlighted by the use of imagery and symbolism. Brothers points out that Green 'told his readers in "The English Novel of the Future" in 1950 that "there can be no precise meaning" in novels; novels will, of necessity, mean different things to different readers'.[583] And in *Blindness*, John Haye, pondering on how becoming blind has changed his perceptions, reflects that, previously:

> When a blackbird fled screaming, he had only been able to see it as a smudge darting along, and he had tried in vain to visualise it exactly. Now he was beginning to see it as a signal to the other birds that something was not right. [...] He would write about these things. [...] And perhaps the way he saw things was the right way, though there could be no right way but one's own. Art was what was created in the looker-on.[584]

John's perceptions have shifted from passive observation ('a smudge darting along') to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of behaviour ('a signal to the other birds'). Brothers echoes this: '*Blindness* focuses on the relationship between I and eye, person and perception, belief and interpretation, reader and text. Meaning is circular, beginning and ending in the self; it is nonverifiable'.[585] She goes on to examine how the concept of blindness works within the novel to produce this:

> The 'blindness,' then, that is depicted in the novel is not just the physical blindness of John Haye. What the novel makes us aware of is that the world and the people in it are, so-to-speak, blind. Fate is a purblind doomster. Characters fail to see because they accept labels that society has affixed to actions and because they assume that what is visible is what is real. They lack an awareness of others because they are blinded by their own egos. They are self-deluded by their own fantasies. Yet those fantasies project and embody the feelings, which are for Green the

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[582] Barbara Brothers, '*Blindness*: The Eye of Henry Green', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 29, 4 (Winter 1983), 403–21, p. 404.
[583] Ibid, pp. 404–05.
[584] *Blindness*, pp. 158–59.
[585] Brothers, p. 405.

most vital aspect of man's existence. His novel is a dramatization of the individual's poignant, failed quest for meaning and understanding.[586]

While admiring the way in which Green has forged a way of writing which can express this quest for meaning at a narrative level, Brothers judges *Blindness* to be flawed because of the latitude it gives readers to misinterpret its intentions. Referring to the structure of the novel (with its suggestion of progression through its section titles and its transcendent ending), she says:

> The weakness in the novel is a result of the fact that the depicted equivocal nature of experience rests uneasily with the straightforward 'Progression' of John to a positive and comfortable commitment to his writing. These two opposing views of the nature of experience may be a source of some confusion to the reader as he tries to respond to the felt life of the novel.[587]

Pascale Aebischer has responded to Brothers' criticism by proposing that, far from being an inadvertent weakness, there is 'enough solid textual evidence to suggest that the contradiction might well be deliberate'.[588] Aebischer expounds first on the extent to which Green subscribes to the 'sick artist' trope of blindness as a form of 'creative disability'.[589] She acknowledges that (as shown in section 1.3.1) 'blindness is popularly associated with the notion of intellectual and sensory compensation', and identifies the way in which blindness is presented as an enabling condition for John by freeing him from the wasteful dissipation of his energies so that he focuses on creative introspection.[590] Next, Aebischer counterpoints this reading with its opposite, 'disabled creativity' whereby 'the narrative voice gives the reader access to a series of John's thoughts. These cumulatively undermine the notion that his blindness provides the necessary bridge to creativity or that his alienation is ultimately enabling'.[591] John's ability to write is always predicated in the future and is never reached: his final epiphany can equally be read as a fit (or even, as Brothers suggests, an episode of sexual release) which re-enacts his earlier blinding and leaves his desire to write still unfulfilled. His entire escape to London has been anticlimactic and frustrating, with no sense of achievement. And, most tellingly, the parallels between John's self-belief and defrocked parson Entwhistle's alcoholic fantasies of superiority

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[586] Ibid, p. 405.
[587] Ibid, p. 412.
[588] Pascale Aebischer, 'Creative Disability/Disabled Creativity in Henry Green's *Blindness* (1926), *Studies in the Novel,* 35, 4 (Winter 2003), pp. 510–25, p. 521.
[589] Ibid, p. 511.
[590] Ibid, p. 512.
[591] Ibid, pp. 518–19.

are clear. These two visions — of creative disability and disabled creativity — seem to negate one another, but Aebischer argues that they should 'stand side by side'.[592] She suggests that the reader is deliberately jerked between opposing standpoints, just as the narrative itself leaps between the points of view of 'metaphorically blind' characters locked in their own perceptions.[593] This indeterminacy, Aebischer suggests, is intentional and fundamental to the development of Green's writing style.

Aebischer goes on to propose that, therefore, rather than *Blindness* being a journey of character development for John Haye, the representation of blindness requires adjustments for Henry Green that develop his prose style:

> the third-person narrator's focalization through the blind hero's consciousness represents a deliberate restriction of the author's palette as both narrator and protagonist are deprived of the dimension of the visual. From the standpoint of the author, *Blindness* represents a self-willed crippling of his creative faculties in that the injury that disrupts the frame of the novel also deprives its author of one of the mainstays of traditional narrative technique and of his own preferred early style. In formal terms, the protagonist's blindness becomes a 'technique of restraint' typical of modernist experimentation with the genre of the novel [...] allowing him to draw off the clichés of authorship, literary models, and preconceptions about the form of the novel.[594]

Thus I argue that although *Blindness* reveals little about the physical or social reality of visual loss, and in fact calls upon many clichéd tropes (including insight, tragedy, compensation, helplessness and purification),[595] nevertheless, Green's unsuccessful engagement with the subject-position of blindness has, as Aebischer suggests, been an enabling factor in the development of his 'oblique' style which comes to fruition in the hearing-impaired world of *Caught*.

Having examined these three styles of phenomenological writing about sensory impairment in fiction, the 'descriptive', the 'intuitive' and the 'oblique', I now wish to consider: where next? In what direction should novelists now head to extend these investigations?

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[592] Ibid, p. 521.
[593] Ibid, p. 521.
[594] Ibid, p. 523.
[595] It is notable that both Brothers and Aebischer also rely heavily on these tropes in their critical language. I have chosen not to highlight each incidence of this, believing first, that by now it should be evident to my reader; and second, that it reflects Green's own usage of blindness for symbolic purposes.

## 1.8 Future representations: overcoming the barriers to representing sensory loss

'The havoc wrought upon the lives of blind people in ages past by these literary traditions is done, and it cannot be undone; but the future is yet to be determined'.[596] Jernigan said this in 1974. As I have shown, the next forty years held a depressingly similar tone, leavened only by a small sprinkling of more ambitious work. Donna M. McDonald describes both the need for change and the difficulty of achieving it:

> Competing but authentic representations of deafness and deaf people's experiences allow readers to variously witness, immerse themselves in, and navigate their way through those experiences. Consequently, establishing universal truths about deaf lives is a risky business and an improbable goal. [...] I define my deafness not as a loss but as an experience. Old as the angels, it is an essential part of my sense of I-am-who-I-am.[597]

As McDonald makes clear, there is not a 'single truth' about sensory loss that, once written, completes the matter. Rather, like race or gender, it is an aspect of human identity which will bear fruit from ongoing, various, authentic representations. How can people with sensory losses, or an interest in them, think themselves out of the constrictions imposed by generations of recurrent themes? I suggest, with Kleege and Hull, that the answer lies in probing the deeper effects of sensory loss, far beyond the simplistic levels of 'not seeing' and 'not hearing', in order to understand how people with sensory losses relate to others and to themselves; in other words to investigate the effects of sensory loss on consciousness.

Variously defined, 'consciousness' has become a popular subject for academic enquiry.[598] In the last two decades, breakthroughs in science (artificial

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[596] Jernigan, p. 9.
[597] McDonald, p. 463–64.
[598] Güven Güzeldere, for example, analyses eight definitions of the word 'consciousness' and twelve of 'consciousness' from the *Oxford English Dictionary,* (2nd edn, unabridged), and groups them into categories of 'community knowledge', 'awakeness', 'having thought, feeling and volition'. Güven Güzeldere, 'The Many Faces of Consciousness: a Field Guide', in *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates,* ed. by Ned Joel Block, Owen J. Flanagan and Güven Güzeldere (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997) pp. 1–67, p. 9. Vimal and Sansthana identify more than forty different ways of using the word 'consciousness' in a non-exhaustive study of the literature and online discussion groups in the areas of metaphysics of consciousness, conceptualanalysis, philosophy of science, neuroscience, psychophysics, and physics, and categorise them into two groups; 'mental experience' and 'mental function'. Ram

intelligence, neuroscience, evolutionary biology) have ignited new developments in the humanities (literature, linguistics, philosophy), producing the burgeoning discipline of consciousness studies. An influential force in this field, the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio has convincingly argued that Descartes' separation of mind and body is categorically wrong:

> 'This "me", that is to say the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is.'

> This is Descartes' error: the abyssal separation between body and mind, between the sizable, dimensioned, mechanically operated, infinitely divisible body stuff, on the one hand, and the unsizable, undimensioned, un-pushpullable, nondivisible mind stuff; the suggestion that reasoning, moral judgement, and the suffering that comes from physical pain or emotional upheaval might exist separately from the body. Specifically: the separation of the most refined operations of mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism.[599]

In other words, the 'me-ness' or 'soul' or 'mind' of a human being is not, as Descartes believed, an identifiable entity, separate from body or brain. Instead, Damasio asserts that the three are integrated and indivisible. This is the fictional territory that Joyce, with his creation of two halves of one whole in cerebral Stephen and fleshly Bloom, explores. Now, with first-hand evidence of different types of brain damage and its resulting behavioural impact on 'selfhood', Damasio has constructed a neurobiological model of the operation of our 'minds':

> One common false intuition […] is that the many strands of sensory processing experienced in the mind — sights and sounds, taste and aroma, surface texture and shape, all 'happen' in a single brain structure […] [but] there is no single region in the human brain equipped to process, simultaneously, representations from all the sensory modalities active when we experience simultaneously, say, sound, movement, shape and colour […]. it is perhaps more fruitful to think that our strong sense of mind integration is created from the concerted effect of large scale systems by synchronising sets of neural activity in separate brain regions, in effect a trick of timing. [600]

L. P. Vimal and D. A. Sansthana, 'On the Quest of Defining Consciousness', *Defining Consciousness,* Special Issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies,* ed. by C. Nunn, 16, 5 (2009), 9–27.

[599] Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 249.

[600] Ibid*,* pp. 94–95.

Rather than merging all bodily sensory inputs in one location and creating an amalgamated image, the brain, says Damasio, processes different aspects of each sensory modality separately, but simultaneously:

> maintaining focused activity at different sites for as long as necessary for meaningful combinations to be made and for reasoning and decision-making to take place. […] Each sensory system appears equipped to provide its own local attention and working-memory devices.[601]

Although we may experience life as a symphony of sights, sounds, smells, textures and tastes, this is not how our brain deals with it. For each sense, a separate set of 'perceptual images' is created, in different brain locations. Because these occur near-simultaneously (in typically-functioning brains), we retain the illusion of a combined image.

Damasio states that brain damage in an area which processes a particular sensory input will prevent images from that sense being formed, but he does not discuss what the effects might be if the primary sensory input itself is atypical. Kleege, however, offers a description of what her own brain makes of the limited information coming through her retinas:

> I 'see' more than I'm supposed to. Ophthalmology textbooks predict that people with macular degeneration will in fact see a black (or perhaps white) hole in the middle of what they're looking at. Ophthalmologists are not necessarily well versed in the neurology and psychology of vision. […] The scintillating motion, vibrant speckles, shadowy emanations, and changing forms [that I see] may have to do with the few remaining good photoreceptors scattered over the macular. When I stare at an object, the few functioning cells in my macular may be dutifully sending reliable messages to the brain, oblivious to the blank space […] that surrounds them. […] My brain receives these messages without the millions of other messages that should corroborate or enhance them. My brain takes what little it has to go on and does the best it can. It hedges its bets. […] I surmise that my general visual experience is something like your experience of optical illusions. […] You stare at the image and see it change before your eyes. In one image, you may see first a vase and then two faces in profile. In another, you see first a rabbit then a duck. These images deceive you because they give your brain inadequate or contradictory information. […] In both cases, there are two equally possible solutions to the visual riddle, so your brain switches from one to the other, and you have the uncanny sensation of 'seeing' the image change. When there's not much to go on […] the brain makes an educated guess. When I stare at an object I can almost feel my brain making such guesses. And there are usually more than two alternatives. Before my eyes, the hazy blue that conceals the object oscillates and shudders, taking on new colours and contours. I 'see' my brain's confusion as it mulls over the amorphous shapes before my eyes. The

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[601] Ibid, p. 96.

> red coffee mug on my desk becomes a green mug, then a green ball, then a black box, then …[602]

Kleege readily admits she is no neurologist, and her speculation on the workings of the brain may be 'more whimsy than fact'.[603] Nevertheless, her personal insight can be used to build upon Damasio's scientific enquiry. The image processing that he describes can explain the effect experienced by Kleege; the brain simultaneously processes all available inputs and makes best sense of them. The popular fantasy of other senses being heightened to compensate for one that is damaged is mistaken. But with one information stream impoverished, then others will be relied upon more strongly. Kleege describes how she may use a sound or texture to help identify an object when her remaining sight alone is not enough. Her hearing and sense of touch have not mutated into superpowers; she is simply paying attention to the information they provide, information that is also available to sighted people but which they do not need to use for the purpose of identification.

This sounds relatively simple, and so far it ties to the medical model of disability with its focus on lacks and incapacities. Yet, having described how her brain processes visual information, Kleege turns her description on its head: 'But this is not what I really see':[604]

> Expectation plays a large role in what I perceive […] I can recognise most things through a quick process of elimination […]. In the normal course of events I encounter only those objects, animals, and people that I can predict I will. […] I cannot see people's faces well enough to recognise them, but often I know them from their posture or gait.[605]

What signals are sent by our eyes (or ears) is only a part of the process. How we think about it is the crucial part of what makes up our 'selfhood' or 'mind' or 'soul'. As we learn from Kleege's description; when she recognises a friend, she does not see the detailed picture that a typically-sighted person will do, but from a combination of factors, including colour or movement; through experience and expectation, she feels that sense of recognition, with its accompanying emotion of pleasure (or perhaps disappointment or irritation).

I have an analogous example of my own here. My hearing loss elicits a process of elimination, just as Kleege finds with her vision. If someone is talking about sailing and the cells in my inner ear pick up a partial word ending in an

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[602] Kleege, *Sight Unseen*, pp. 102–07.
[603] Ibid, p. 102.
[604] Ibid, p. 107.
[605] Ibid, p. 107.

'oat' sound, my brain will substitute 'boat', not 'goat'. I may not even be consciously aware of the process. If someone makes an unpleasant comment, I may feel an emotional impact without hearing the exact words. A combination of factors contribute: a change of facial expression; an emphasis or prolonged silence; a reaction from someone else; a memory of similar occasions. My consciousness registers an effect, without the full set of sensory information from my ears.

This is not unique to the person with a sensory impairment. Typically sighted and hearing people also take shortcuts to that moment of recognition, without taking in all the detail that is available to them from their unimpaired senses. As Kleege points out:

> At the supermarket I distinguish the Cheerios from the Wheaties because one hazy blur is yellow and the other is orange. But in a way, you do this too. Marketing experts chose that colour to catch your eye, and the eye of your three-year-old, who can't read the words yet. […] The unimpaired human eye provides the brain with such a surfeit of visual information that only a certain amount consciously registers at any moment. In effect your brain privileges certain aspects of the retina's images and disregards others. Each eye sends the brain a billion messages per second. […] With all this information flooding in every second, the perceptual system seems designed to adapt readily to losses and distortions, whether because of eye damage or other circumstances.[606]

Everyone processes perceptual images from partial information, all the time: whether from ignorance, carelessness, lack of inputs, even excess of inputs. The emotional reaction we instinctively feel as our brain creates this image is based on these shortcuts, assumptions and expectations; not on pure sensory input alone.

Damasio explains that the brain cannot store the perceptual 'images' that it creates upon seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, or tasting an object: 'the brain does not file Polaroid pictures […] nor does it store audiotapes. […] If the brain were like a conventional library, we would run out of shelves'.[607] Instead, he suggests that recalled or imagined images are created by neuron firing patterns which are similar to (but not exactly the same as) the patterns which were once experienced through direct perception: 'These recalled images tend to be held in consciousness only fleetingly […] and […] are often inaccurate or incomplete'.[608]

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[606] Ibid, p. 107.
[607] Damasio, *Descartes' Error,* p. 100.
[608] Ibid, p. 101.

Thus the path of human thought becomes even more convoluted. When we recollect a face or the sound of a voice, it will not be the original version that we once 'saw' or 'heard', but a remade one. Not only is our original perception shaped by our assumptions and expectations but then, recalling it to memory, we invariably create a new and different image. Damasio explains that these recreated images 'embody knowledge pertaining to how certain types of situations usually have been paired with certain emotional responses in your individual experience'.[609] He stresses that the resulting thought/emotion package is unique: 'it may be at subtle or at major variance with that of others; it is yours alone'.[610] The lesson to be drawn is that perception, emotion, thought and decision-making are tangled together; they are not discrete steps in an assembly line. As human beings, our interpretation of situations is emotionally coloured and intensely individual, drawing only partially on sensory input. Examining Kleege's and Hull's experiences in the light of research into consciousness gives a greater insight into the physicality and psychology of sensory loss. This is important: finding a literary style suited to the portrayal of deafblindness must be based on accurate content. The appendix to this thesis investigates this further, attempting to answer the question 'why should consciousness differ for the deafblind?' In the next chapter, I shall investigate ways of interpreting such difference through narrative means so that the non-impaired will gain access to the experience and the similarly-impaired may recognise it.

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[609] Ibid, p. 101.
[610] Ibid, p. 101.

# Chapter 2. Which narrative techniques can better convey deafblindness?

## 2.1 Overview of chapter

The previous chapter outlined a gap in representation. This chapter will investigate ways in which it might be filled. Reference is made to the 'Provisionality Principle', a term which is fully described within the appendix to this thesis.[1] In coining it, I have built on philosopher of mind Daniel Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model of consciousness, which aims to show that the apparent 'stream' of consciousness that we experience is in fact a misleading illusion.[2] The 'Provisionality Principle' theorises that the experience of deafblindness disrupts this illusion of perceptive unity to such an extent that the underlying multiplicity of consciousness is revealed. In this chapter, I will turn to two novels which are particularly concerned with representing the consciousness of their fictional characters, and which forge new technical means to do so. These novels are Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.

First, in section 2.2, I examine the narrative strategies used by Henry James in *What Maisie Knew*. Drawing upon 'Theory of Mind' work by Lisa Zunshine, analysis of intersubjectivity by George Butte, and a qualitative approach to narrative standpoints by Richard Aczel, I find that James's method of expressing the interaction between the 'different' (childish) consciousness of Maisie and the normative consciousness of her adult companions provides useful lessons for representing deafblind interactions.

Then, in section 2.3, I move on to examine James's narratorial voice, which accentuates the inaccessibility of Maisie's interior thoughts. I highlight how, in the case of a deafblind character, such an approach might undermine the reader's ability to empathise. By contrast, in section 2.4, I investigate Virginia Woolf's innovative use of sentence structure to mirror thought processes in *Mrs Dalloway*. Analysing two particular uses of the dash and of brackets in the light of the 'Orwellian' and 'Stalinesque' models of thinking defined by Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne (as discussed in the appendix), I relate this to Woolf's ideas about consciousness.[3]

Finally, in section 2.5 I examine strategies used by James and Woolf to push the reader into actively engaging with the text, and ascertain how these practices can be adapted for use in a deafblind context.

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[1] Appendix A, section A.7 and A.8.
[2] Appendix A; in particular sections A.2 and A.6–A.8.
[3] Appendix A, section A.7

**2.2 Whose point of view? Henry James and the subjective narrator**

In order to move away from a symbolic presentation of sensory loss and grapple with the more taxing task of conveying the cognitive adjustments made by deafblind people, writers need to find methods to help readers recognise the particularity of these adjustments. Foreshadowing these aims, Henry James found that in creating a child as his protagonist in *What Maisie Knew*, he needed 'to make and to keep her limited consciousness the very field of my picture while at the same time guarding with care the integrity of the objects represented'.[4] In other words, he wished to reveal something of the consciousness of a child and its great difference from the normative outlook of an adult.

James considered, and even attempted having Maisie tell her own story, but after 'reflexion and experiment' he discarded this approach: a picture restricted 'to what the child might be conceived to have UNDERSTOOD — to have been able to interpret and appreciate […] showed me my subject strangled in that extreme of rigour'.[5] His chosen subject of a child's 'different' consciousness could not be expressed through Maisie's own words because one critical element, as James conjured it, is her apprehension of thoughts and emotions without their articulation: 'Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them'.[6] A comparable obstacle stands in the way of using a deafblind character as a mouthpiece: the character will not perceive all of what is 'different' about the cognitive experience. A reader requires the contrast with the non-sensory-impaired condition to be drawn, but the deafblind character cannot easily articulate that comparison, just as Maisie cannot articulate the difference between a child's and an adult's consciousness.

A way of circumventing this restriction might be to move through multiple first-person viewpoints; thus keeping consistently within a single character's mindset at any one moment, but allowing the reader to perceive and process the different reactions and behaviours of the various characters, so that differences may emerge. However, this asks much of the reader, who may not interpret the dissonances as intended. This, of course, is true for any subject matter: the reader's interpretations cannot — and indeed, should not — be rigidly controlled. Nevertheless, deafblindness carries a special risk. Not only are other, unimpaired characters more likely to misread or misinterpret a deafblind character's behaviour, so too is the unimpaired reader.

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[4] James, 'Preface', p. 144.
[5] Ibid, p. 145.
[6] Ibid, p. 145.

Lisa Zunshine's investigation into fictional consciousness elucidates this risk by applying lessons from cognitive science.[7] Finding that the human mind is primed to draw conclusions about another person's intentions, emotion, and thoughts from their external behaviour, Zunshine describes this concept of a 'mind-reading ability', also called 'Theory of Mind' or 'ToM' by cognitive psychologists, as an 'evolved cognitive tendency to assume that there *must be* a mental stance behind each physical action'.[8] Therefore, she concludes, we are driven 'to explain people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires'.[9] There is a clear equivalence here with what Daniel Dennett calls 'the intentional stance': 'the strategy of interpreting the behavior of an entity (person, animal, artefact, whatever) by treating it *as if* it were a rational agent who governed its "choice of action" by a "consideration" of "beliefs" and "desires"'.[10] Dennett describes this as a 'useful shortcut' to predicting behaviour.[11] It is an instinctive and accurate enough survival strategy: 'probably even genetically favoured', that enables us 'mind-havers' to see 'pattern in all the activity ' of a 'complex, moving entity'.[12] Dennett points out that this way of thinking about other entities 'presupposes (or fosters) the rationality, and hence the unity, of the agent', thus reinforcing the 'Cartesian Theater' conceptualisation of the mind.[13] The obvious risk is that the 'lazy extrapolation of the intentional stance *all the way in*' can prevent us from recognising that it is a tactic to be employed rather than an actual truth.[14]

Whereas Dennett discusses the 'intentional stance' in terms of humans instinctively conceptualising the minds of other humans, of animals and even of objects, Zunshine takes her study of 'Theory of Mind' in a different direction. She posits that this key and instinctive life skill also underpins the reading of fiction; indeed, 'makes literature as we know it possible':

> The very process of making sense of what we read appears to be grounded in our ability to invest the flimsy verbal constructions that we generously call 'characters' with a potential for a variety of thoughts, feelings, and desires, and

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[7] Lisa Zunshine, 'Theory of Mind and Experimental Representations of Fictional Consciousness', *Narrative*, 11, 3 (October 2003), 270–91.
[8] Ibid, p. 277.
[9] Ibid, p. 272.
[10] Daniel C. Dennett, *Kinds of Minds: Towards an Understanding of Consciousness* (London: Phoenix, 1997), p. 27.
[11] Ibid, p. 31.
[12] Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 458.
[13] Ibid, p. 458. The 'Cartesian Theater' is a term coined by Dennett to describe the (mistaken, in his opinion) concept of a central, unified centre of processing within the brain that produces 'consciousness'. A full discussion can be found in Appendix A of this thesis, section A.2.3.
[14] Ibid, p. 458.

then to look for the 'cues' that allow us to guess at their feelings and thus to predict their actions.[15]

Taking examples from Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Zunshine shows how our minds 'effortlessly' foreground the most likely emotional stance behind a reported behaviour — using context to 'constrain our interpretations'.[16] So, when Peter Walsh meets Clarissa Dalloway, we readers presume that his trembling has more to do with their past romantic history than with the temperature of her drawing room. As Zunshine explains:

> our ToM allows us to connect Peter Walsh's trembling to his emotional state (in the absence of any additional information that could account for his body language in a different way), thus usefully constraining our interpretive domain and enabling us to start considering endlessly nuanced choices *within that domain.*[17]

But, Zunshine stresses, this does not necessarily make our assumption correct. Dennett points out that the evolutionary origin of the 'intentional stance' primes it for speedy response above reliability.[18] When reading, we may miss some factors or bring in others (such as our own personal history) and jump to the wrong conclusions. The 'effortlessness' of the process relates to immediacy rather than accuracy. This identifies a pitfall for non-sensory-impaired readers confronting a deafblind character: the context that such readers bring to their reading is their own, in which different intentions will often be ascribed to the deafblind character's behaviours than is actually the case. Thus, during passages written from the point of view of another character, it is likely that readers will share that character's unhelpful misinterpretations of the deafblind person's behaviour. Zunshine explains: 'Literature pervasively capitalizes on and stimulates ToM mechanisms that evolved to deal with real people, even as readers remain aware on some level that fictive characters are not real people at all.'[19]

Henry James's solution for evoking a child's 'different' cognitive processes was to allow Maisie's own words space, but to envelop them with a powerful narratorial voice: 'Maisie's terms accordingly play their part — since her simpler conclusions quite depend on them; but our own commentary constantly attends and amplifies.'[20] This ever-present narrator bridges a gap between Maisie and the reader whenever 'those parts of her experience that she understands darken off into others that she rather

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[15] Zunshine, p. 274.
[16] Ibid, p. 275.
[17] Ibid, p. 275.
[18] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 75.
[19] Zunshine, p. 273.
[20] James, 'Preface', p. 146.

tormentedly misses'.[21] However, as George Butte has shown, James does not make this narratorial figure omniscient. Building on Zunshine's work, Butte describes James's 'deep intersubjectivity' and defines this term as:

> a narrative practice […] in which the mirrorings of subjectivities multiply. […] Deep intersubjectivity extends the narrative of consciousness of consciousness to the all-important third — and exponentially different — orbit in this solar system of subjectivities. In this third orbit one perceives, or believes one perceives, in the other's body or language a trace of one's own previous and now appropriated gesture, redirected to oneself for further embodiment or revision. These perceptions of appropriation, and of appropriation of appropriation, extend down the long corridor of attending consciousnesses, which, however indolent or perhaps malevolent, perceive and misperceive embodiments in each other. 'Deep intersubjectivity' names this string of perceptions in a series of nested narrations represented as inside or beside other consciousnesses.[22]

Butte describes the 'shifting strategies' involved: 'In particular, Jamesian narrators guarantee a perception of perceptions perceived along a sliding scale of verifiability.'[23] First, Butte gives examples of occasions when 'perceived perceptions of prior gestures seem reliable'.[24] These include the visit by Maisie and her father to the elegant drawing room belonging to the mysterious Countess, 'with or without' whom Beale plans to 'be off to America'.[25] There is a silent exchange of absolute clarity between Maisie and Beale: 'if he had an idea at the back of his head she had also one in a recess as deep, and for a time, while they sat together, there was an extraordinary mute passage between her vision of this vision of his, his vision of her vision, and her vision of his vision of her vision'.[26] It concludes with Beale offering to take Maisie to America with him and with Maisie understanding that he wants her to refuse: 'It was exactly as if he had broken out to her: "I say, you little booby, help me to be irreproachable, to be noble, and yet to have none of the beastly bore of it. There's only impropriety enough for one of us; so *you* must take it all. *Repudiate* your dear old daddy — in the face, mind you, of his tender supplications."'[27]

From such intersubjective transparency, Butte moves on to an 'intermediate intersubjectivity' when 'the text offers […] a representation of a perception of a *possible* perception of a state of yet another character's mind'.[28] Although Butte's own example

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[21] Ibid, p. 146.
[22] George Butte, 'Henry James and Deep Intersubjectivity', *The Henry James Review*, 30, 2 (Spring 2009), 129–43, pp. 130–31.
[23] Ibid, p. 139.
[24] Ibid, p. 139.
[25] Henry James, *What Maisie Knew,* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), p. 150.
[26] Ibid, p. 150.
[27] Ibid, p. 153.
[28] Butte, p. 140.

is not drawn from *Maisie*, another can be found in the carriage scene when Maisie's father brings her back to live with him after a period with her mother. Accompanying them is Miss Overmore, the pretty young governess originally hired by Maisie's mother but who has defected to live with Beale, Maisie's father. Maisie seeks to clarify the emotions around her:

> 'Did papa like you just the same while I was gone?' […] Papa, on whose knee she sat, burst into one of those loud laughs of his that, however prepared she was, seemed always, like some trick in a frightening game, to leap forth and make her jump. Before Miss Overmore could speak he replied: 'Why, you little donkey, when you're away what have I left to do but just to love her?' Miss Overmore hereupon immediately took her from him, and they had a merry little scrimmage over her of which Maisie caught the surprised perception in the white stare of an old lady who passed in a victoria. Then her beautiful friend remarked to her very gravely: 'I shall make him understand that if he ever again says anything as horrid as that to you I shall carry you straight off and we'll go and live somewhere together and be good quiet little girls.' The child couldn't quite make out why her father's speech had been horrid.[29]

Although the reader has a good idea of what is going on in the adults' minds, Maisie does not. Left to rationalise their behaviour as best she can in the light of her own limited experience, she senses that she is missing something: the surprised white stare of the old lady is testament to the mystery. This, I believe, is the central theme of the novel. The presumed 'what' that Maisie knows has less to do with the sordid facts of the tangled adult relationships around her, than with her own emerging awareness that there is *something* to know. This growing awareness is responsible for Maisie's 'innocence so saturated with knowledge', which the adult characters find deeply disturbing.[30]

Finally, Butte shows how 'partial obscurity can become complete darkness'.[31] Again, his illustration is from a different novel, but the closing lines of *Maisie* not only provide an example; they confirm how thematically important this is to the novel as a whole. Abandoning Sir Claude after he has declined to leave Mrs Beale (who was Miss Overmore), Maisie and Mrs Wix leave by boat, unwitnessed by Sir Claude:

> Maisie waited a moment; then 'He wasn't there' she simply said again.
> Mrs. Wix also was silent a while. 'He went to *her*,' she finally observed.
> 'Oh I know!' the child replied.
> Mrs. Wix gave a sidelong look. She still had room for wonder at what Maisie knew.[32]

Marcus Klein teases out the 'tonalities' of the word 'wonder' in this context:

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[29] *Maisie*, p. 53.
[30] Ibid, p. 150.
[31] Butte, p. 141.
[32] *Maisie*, p. 266.

> it really cannot mean that Mrs. Wix really and simply is nonplussed because we have long ago come to know that Mrs. Wix has known what, in every essential, Maisie knows, nor has Maisie here signaled any great new insight. 'Wonder' in this instance is a refusal definitively to know [...].[33]

Thus, Klein says, 'Mrs Wix 'will suppress knowledge of what Maisie knows'.[34] By the end of the novel, Maisie has matured, and she sees further: her mother's devious brutality, Sir Claude's weakness, Mrs Wix's desperate infatuation. Until now, her uncomfortable awareness that there is *something* she doesn't understand has outweighed her ability to perceive what exactly that something is. Now things are different. Maisie's 'Theory of Mind' has developed enough for her to make better sense of the inwardness of others: 'Strangely, indescribably, her perception of reasons kept pace with her sense of trouble.'[35] No longer a blank wall off which their communications bounce, in a way that sometimes amuses her adult companions, sometimes horrifies them, Maisie is entering the interactive sphere of coexisting consciousnesses that opens her up into a Bakhtinian 'unfinalizable' character. Speaking of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin describes how:

> the author's consciousness does not transform others' consciousnesses (that is, the consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others' equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as itself. It reflects and re-creates not a world of objects, but precisely these other consciousnesses with their worlds, re-creates them in their authentic unfinalizability (which is, after all, their essence).[36]

This non-objectifying interplay of consciousnesses is James's achievement here also. A number of critics have read Maisie's story as one that charts the development of her moral awareness.[37] Yet the final chapter clearly denies this. Mrs Wix (driven in no small part by her own sexualised obsession with Sir Claude) vainly exhorts Maisie to find the 'moral sense' that Mrs Wix desperately wants to have 'brought out', and come away with her to escape the contamination of his illicit relationship with Mrs Beale.[38] But Maisie cannot find any such moral sense in herself; it is as forgotten as old schoolroom lessons. Indeed, she has only moments before offered to give up Mrs Wix, for Sir Claude, but only if he will give up Mrs Beale, so that the two of them, young

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[33] Marcus Klein, 'What to Make of "Maisie"', *New England Review*, 27, 4 (2006), 134–57, p 154.
[34] Ibid, p 154.
[35] *Maisie*, p. 205.
[36] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson, *Theory and History of Literature 8,* ed. by Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 68.
[37] For example, James W. Gargano, '*What Maisie Knew*: The Evolution of a "Moral Sense"', *Nineteenth Century Fiction,* 16, 1 (Jun. 1961), 33–46.
[38] *Maisie*, p. 261.

stepfather and almost-out-of-childhood stepdaughter, can live alone together — an arrangement that would surely be more shocking still than the one from which Mrs Wix is trying to save her. Characterised by Sir Claude as 'the most beautiful thing I've ever met', this attempt to bargain represents something more significant than a sense of decency: '"She made her condition — with such a sense of what it should be! She made the only right one."' I suggest that 'right' here does not mean 'morally admirable', but rather that it is the only choice which, with arrow-sharp exquisiteness, exposes the mixed motivations of all concerned, and Sir Claude's in particular. Klein has unpicked the 'confused and complicating kinds of desire' that undermine Sir Claude's relationships, in particular the one with his step-daughter.[39] Maisie's ultimatum would lay all this out on the surface, and is therefore the very one which, after days of discussing possible permutations of living arrangements, Sir Claude cannot accept. It is not moral sense that guides Maisie — she would run off with Sir Claude in an instant — but her newly-burgeoning inter-subjectivity: her instinct has, for the first time, reached directly to the heart of his faulty motivations.

Through Butte's analysis, we see how the Jamesian narrator's shifting position means that readers, like characters, are drawn into 'dazzlingly labyrinthine sequences' of intersubjectivities in which 'the degree of error and deception varies enormously'.[40] The narrator may inform the reader but does not offer an infallible guide to thoughts and emotions. Looking back at James's words, we notice his striking use of the plural pronoun: '*our* own commentary constantly attends and amplifies'.[41] Rather than situating the narratorial voice as an authoritative authorial tool (in which case it would be '*my* own commentary'), he proffers it as a joint author-reader effort. The narrator is not only another layer of subjectivity through which the reader must filter his or her own impressions, but also an interpretative process in which the reader must collaborate.

This subjective, collaborative narrator can be usefully examined in the light of Richard Aczel's persuasive argument for a qualitative (as opposed to purely categorising) approach to understanding narration. Aczel interprets the Jamesian narrator via Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse ('discourse orientated towards the discourse of others').[42] In so doing, he draws on Mary Galbraith's previous identification of 'the languages of law, journalism, gossip, moral rectitude and literary wit' in the opening sentences of *What Maisie Knew*: [43]

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[39] Klein, p. 143.
[40] Butte, p. 131.
[41] James, 'Preface', p. 146.
[42] Bakhtin, p. 199.
[43] Richard Aczel, 'Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts', *New Literary History*, 29, 3 (1998), 467–500, p. 482.

The litigation had seemed interminable and had in fact been complicated; but by the decision on the appeal the judgment of the divorce-court was confirmed as to the assignment of the child. The father, who, though bespattered from head to foot, had made good his case, was, in pursuance of this triumph, appointed to keep her: it was not so much that the mother's character had been more absolutely damaged as that the brilliancy of a lady's complexion (and this lady's, in court, was immensely remarked) might be more regarded as showing the spots.[44]

Working from the multiple social discourses named by Galbraith, Aczel unpicks this extract to show how the narrator embeds and juxtaposes quotations from different social groups in order to achieve a comedic effect. This effect depends upon:

the reader's recognition of the incongruity in the relationship of a quoted utterance both to its object (heroic language referred to the unheroic Beale Farange) and to the other (quoted) utterances in which it is embedded (the language of the court). The field of quotation is further extended in the second half of the second sentence. Here the perspectival verbs 'remarked' and 'regarded' not only introduce a new angle of focalization (that of whoever does the remarking and regarding), but also alert us to the incorporation of 'another's speech in another's language' in the utterance. The use of the indirect article in 'a lady's complexion' suggests that we are dealing with a (quoted) common view, rather than just a narratorial description of the lady in question. The semantic overkill of 'absolutely' and 'immensely' seems to reproduce, with comic effect, the somewhat histrionic language of the inquisitive social group attending the litigation.[45]

For Aczel, this 'polyphony of quoted discourses' has the effect of implicating (or, as Aczel points out, self-implicating) society as a whole in Maisie's outcome.[46] James has used this polyphonic narratorial position to flavour the narrative (in a subtle and economic way) with the attitudes and reactions of a wider social context than could be easily described through the words or actions of the main characters alone. Discourse is refracted through discourse, and thus creates the perfect medium for James to display the effect of different consciousnesses working upon each other to produce, as Bakhtin has it, 'a will to the event':

The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded. One could put it this way: the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event.[47]

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[44] *Maisie,* p. 35.
[45] Aczel, p. 482.
[46] Ibid, p. 482.
[47] Bakhtin, p. 21.

Thus, the final event of the novel — Maisie's departure with Mrs Wix — is not the result of her individual moral choice, but rather the result of the interaction of 'many wills, a will to the event'.

Throughout the story, this ability to embed multiple voices in contiguous (or even combined) utterances becomes a way of reflecting multiple pieces of information to the reader about different characters' thoughts and feelings. Two examples will suffice:

> (1) 'Your papa wishes you never to forget, you know, that he has been dreadfully put about.' If the skin on Moddle's face had to Maisie the air of being unduly, almost painfully, stretched, it never presented that appearance so much as when she uttered, as she often had occasion to utter, such words.[48]

In two sentences we are given the immediately recognisable idiom of Beale Farange, incongruously voiced through Moddle. The discomfort Moddle feels is expressed in a grimace which Maisie does not recognise but which the reader easily interprets as pained disapproval (since, as Zunshine's analysis explains, our minds are primed to attribute states of mind to behavioural actions). An apparently anodyne interjection by the narrator ('as she often had occasion to utter') tells us that Beale frequently coerces Moddle into passing on such distasteful messages. In swift succession therefore we have Beale's self-pity; Maisie's naïvity; Moddle's powerless disgust; together with an objective indication that this is a typical scenario in the household; all wrapped in a politely formal rhetoric which is at odds with (and therefore highlights) the unpleasantness of Beale's behaviour.

Turning now to a second example, in which Maisie's mother and Beale's ex-wife, Ida, features:

> (2) It was of a horrid little critical system, a tendency, in her silence, to judge her elders, that this lady suspected her, liking as she did, for her own part, a child to be simple and confiding.[49]

The judgmental tone ('horrid', 'suspected') and the colloquial, self-involved style ('as she did', 'for her own part') of the free indirect speech makes it clear that we are hearing some of Ida Farange's actual words filtered through the more formal phrasing of the narratorial voice. Again, that formality, including the distancing effect of 'this lady', counterpoints (and therefore exposes) both Ida's emotional incontinence and the nastiness of her accusations. The apparent objectivity of reporting Ida's speech this way has an additional, rather subtle, effect. It suggests that Maisie (who is the audience for Ida's harsh words) may be absorbing her mother's criticisms and, as children do, accepting them to some extent as a definition of herself.

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[48] *Maisie*, p. 40.
[49] Ibid, p. 45.

These two examples show how James makes use of an extraordinarily supple narratorial voice, which flexes into different ventriloquising stances, thus allowing single utterances to convey information about multiple characters and their contexts. Through his Bakhtinian analysis of such 'double-voicing', Aczel posits that we do not need to consider the narrator of a text as a 'uniform teller persona', but can rather locate it 'as in fact a composite configuration of voices, whose identity lies in the rhetorical organization of their constituent elements'.[50]

This liberating standpoint frees the writer interested in consciousness to think less about 'who' is telling the story at any moment (because as James shows, more than one point of view can be simultaneously conveyed) and more about 'how' various points of view may be best configured. For the purposes of showing the interactions between a deafblind character and those without sensory impairments, a subjective, composite narrative voice has clear advantages.

## 2.3 Highlighting a hidden consciousness: Jamesian obscurity

The use of a fluidly subjective narratorial position style could be described as encapsulating the skill that James highlights in Maisie herself: 'the art of not thinking singly'.[51] Michelle Phillips builds on this to describe Maisie as 'always at once ally and enemy in either parent's deeply embittered camp'.[52] Discussing these 'divided and divisive capacities' that Maisie possesses, Phillips claims that 'This sense of the child's as a problematic and problematizing interior was nearly inconceivable a mere generation prior.'[53] Susan Honeyman has also linked James's interest in representing a child's consciousness with the nascent modernist movement, identifying it as an indicator of a general trend of moving away from behavioural 'types' and towards the singularity of individual minds. She too recognises a change of direction from previous representations of children, noting the way in which earlier nineteenth-century writers (such as Dickens, Twain, Stowe and Hawthorne) used 'the power of child figures to represent stock attributes like vulnerability, naturalness, purity, original sin'.[54] This parallels with the stereotyped ways in which sensory loss has been represented in

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[50] Aczel, p. 495.
[51] *Maisie*, p. 176.
[52] Michelle H. Phillips, 'The *"Partagé* Child" and the Emergence of the Modernist Novel in *What Maisie Knew*', *The Henry James Review*, 31, 2 (Spring 2010), 95–110, p. 96.
[53] Ibid, p. 96. Phillips draws on studies of nineteenth century attitudes to childhood by Lewis Roberts, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, U. C. Knoepflmacher, and Carolyn Steedman (pp. 96–97).
[54] Susan Honeyman, '*What Maisie Knew* and the Impossible Representation of Childhood', *The Henry James Review*, 22, 1 (Winter 2001), 67–80, p. 79.

fiction, as discussed in Chapter 1. It also suggests that James, embarking on a deeper, more problematised representation of a child's 'divided' interior, may provide a model in further ways for an attempt at a more complex representation of the deafblind consciousness.

With this in mind, I wish to look more closely at the way in which James represents that interior. Phillips carefully chronicles Maisie's emerging interiority and notes the novel's marked use of metaphor. Beale and Ida both regard their daughter's interior as an empty space to be filled by them — it is the 'ready vessel' and 'porcelain cup' into which her parents pour their own bitterness.[55] That their supposition is mistaken is soon shown by Maisie's discovery of a 'dim closet' in her own mind, whose 'high drawers' she will one day reach to access the 'games' she does not yet understand but that she knows to exist.[56] The first turning point that Phillips identifies comes when 'Maisie claims for herself an interiority not reserved for children'.[57] By this, Phillips means that, conventionally, children were not supposed to have a private mind at all. As Maisie's mother Ida Farange exclaims with irritation, a child should be 'simple and confiding': in other words, transparent and lacking in interiority.[58] Realising 'that she had been a centre of hatred and a messenger of insult and that everything was bad because she had been employed to make it so', Maisie's 'parted lips locked themselves'.[59] She begins to carve out her own interior space, putting walls around it so that her thoughts become opaque to her parents. Instead of artlessly reflecting the views of each to the other: 'she would repeat nothing, and when, as a tribute to the successful application of her system, she began to be called a little idiot, she tasted a pleasure new and keen'.[60] No longer a sponge that each parent can soak with insults to fling at the other, Maisie now moves on from this strategy of mere passive muteness and seeks to influence the (imperfectly understood) behaviour of her parents. Although the fact of her individual interiority and its separateness from that of others is insisted upon, the reader never steps inside Maisie's head. Honeyman states: 'Maisie becomes the eyes and ears through which the reader perceives her fictive reality, yet writer and reader alike are barred from access to her conscious thought. We see what Maisie sees, but we cannot know what Maisie knows.'[61]

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[55] *Maisie*, p. 36.
[56] Ibid, p. 41.
[57] Ibid, p. 45.
[58] Ibid, p. 43.
[59] Ibid, p. 43.
[60] Ibid, p. 43.
[61] Honeyman, p. 71.

There is more to this than simply drawing a veil over Maisie's mind. Phillips shows that the narrator's limitations, as just another subjective voice, reveal the desire both to explore Maisie's consciousness and to expose the difficulty of doing so: the narrator who 'attends and amplifies' also obscures. Honeyman agrees and draws on the work of Galbraith and Chatman to point out that James's intention is specifically to draw attention to the impossibility of entering Maisie's mind: 'James does not presume to give a close representation of Maisie's inexpressible thought. In fact, his frequent use of indirect discourse insures that the reader remains aware of Maisie's inaccessibility.'[62] An example of what Honeyman describes as the 'veil of distancing qualification',[63] which the narrator places between the reader and Maisie's thoughts, will help explain: 'it then fell into its place in her general, her habitual view of the particular phenomenon that, had she felt the need of words for it, she might have called her personal relation to her knowledge'.[64] With phrases like 'had she felt the need' and 'she might have called', James makes it clear that Maisie's thinking is not like our adult thinking: she does not put concepts into words in the way that we would do. Language cannot explain: it is not that we cannot know *what* Maisie knows, but that we cannot know *how* she knows. The workings of her childish mind are mysterious to us. Aczel agrees: 'In all this the reader's attention is led away from the events of the story to a consideration of the production of the discourse itself.'[65]

Such a presumption of essential unknowability would be integrally problematic for writing about sensory loss. Whereas James sought to highlight Maisie's inaccessibility, my purpose is to open a window for the reader on to the deafblind consciousness and how it can hold simultaneous yet conflicting interpretations of a set of perceptions: the 'Provisionality Principle' in action.[66] To investigate ways of conveying not just 'what' but 'how' someone thinks, I will move further into the experiments of literary modernism and turn to the writer whom Zunshine chose to illustrate 'Theory of Mind' at work in literature: Virginia Woolf.

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[62] Ibid, p. 70.
[63] Ibid, p. 69.
[64] *Maisie*, p. 204.
[65] Aczel, p. 471.
[66] The Provisionality Principle is discussed in Appendix A, sections A.7 and A.8.

## 2.4 Burrowing through consciousness: Woolfian disclosure

### 2.4.1 Using sentence structure to express the 'flow of thought'

James Harker notes that many critics, from Auerbach to Michael North, have crowned Woolf as the monarch of 'inwardness', declaring that she uses exterior events and actions solely as a trigger for inner experience.[67] Nicholas Marsh continues this theme when he claims that *Mrs Dalloway* reveals 'Woolf's concentration on a pre-conscious level of mental experience'.[68] Marsh's close reading shows Woolf's use of two distinct sentence structures: the 'short, terse single sentence', used for dialogue, single thoughts, or details of actions; and 'unusually long and loosely constructed multiple sentences' that reveal internal experience.[69] The structure of these longer, meandering sentences, Marsh says, 'seems to imitate the darting, bit-by-bit, loosely connected flow of thought and emotion'.[70] He offers two examples from the scene when Peter Walsh interrupts Clarissa Dalloway on the morning of her party:

> (1) Now the door opened, and in came — for a single second she could not remember what he was called! so surprised she was to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning! (She had not read his letter.)[71]

> (2) Here she is mending her dress, mending her dress as usual, he thought; here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties; running to the House and back and all that, he thought, growing more and more irritated, more and more agitated, for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard.[72]

Marsh points out that in the first example, the parenthesis is never completed. A dash introduces a description of Clarissa's surprise, and the original phrase 'in came' is not finished. In the second example, he notes how Peter Walsh's thoughts get sidetracked as they approach Clarissa's husband. From 'running to the House and back', Peter falls into a generalisation about women and marriage and then circles back with sarcastic resentment to 'the admirable Richard'. Marsh pinpoints how the sentence structure mirrors the mental processes involved: 'So the direction of thought includes detours and delays, in both cases; and the sentence-construction shows that the characters are unsuccessful at putting their thoughts together as a sequential

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[67] James Harker, 'Misperceiving Virginia Woolf', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34, 2 (Winter 2011), 1–21, p. 1.
[68] Nicholas Marsh, *Virginia Woolf: The Novels* (New York: St Martin's, 1998), p. 6.
[69] Ibid, p. 5.
[70] Ibid, p. 6.
[71] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 51–52.
[72] Ibid, pp. 52–53.

development of ideas.'[73] This, Marsh adds, is combined with the use of present participles ('mending', 'sitting', 'playing', 'running'); which gives a sense of continuous present within the characters' consciousness, although the narrative itself employs a more conventional past tense. Thus Woolf renders characters in the process of making their thoughts, not simply reporting on them: characters caught in 'the momentary flow of mental and emotional life'.[74] Rather than constituting a scientific trace of thoughts being formed, Woolf's technique is, of course, a highly stylised impression; one that conveys, rather than recreates the activity. For a writer seeking a literary correlative for a deafblind character's multiplicity of thought, this effect merits close study. I now aim to take Marsh's analysis a step further.

These marks, as Marsh suggests, are used to indicate transitions; how thoughts overlap one another. They give a sense of the interruptions, discontinuities, and simultaneities of our mental processes, which cannot easily be conveyed through the linearity of writing. As James did with *Maisie*, Woolf identifies the mismatch between thought and language: apprehension is not the same as articulation. Her approach, however, is different; whereas James walls off direct entry into Maisie's mind, Woolf plunges into Clarissa's. Her method is to manipulate sentence structures, making particular use of parentheses, in order to create hierarchies of thoughts and give an impression of how they pass through the mind. There is much to be said about the rich and varied ways in which Woolf does this, but I will focus on two elements. To illustrate these, I shall refer to the first of Marsh's examples above (which contains both a dash and a pair of brackets), and to a further extract containing a single sentence that uses both marks. Here, Peter Walsh, upset by Clarissa's brief letter which says how 'heavenly' it has been to see him again, is imaginatively recreating her thoughts during his earlier visit:

> (3) She had felt a great deal; had for a moment, when she kissed his hand, regretted, envied him even, remembered possibly (for he saw her look it) something he had said — how they would change the world if she married him perhaps; whereas, it was this; it was middle age; it was mediocrity; then forced herself with her indomitable vitality to put all that aside, there being in her a thread of life which for toughness, endurance, power to overcome obstacles and carry her triumphantly through he had never known the like of.[75]

Looking first at the use of dashes, we see in example (3) another interrupted parenthesis like the one Marsh identified in example (1). These lone dashes seem to signal the introduction of information that in fact replaces what has been said before. Example (1) has: 'in came — for a single moment she could not remember what he

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[73] Marsh, p. 6.
[74] Ibid, p. 6.
[75] *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 203.

was called!' The intensity of the cluster of emotions bound up in Clarissa's surprise overwrites her initial impression of his entrance. Similarly, example (3) gives us: 'something he had said — how they would change the world if she married him perhaps'. Here, Peter leaps from the vague 'something' into an assumption of what that might be (the immense and unrealised potential of Clarissa and himself as a joint force). He abandons any uncertainty about what Clarissa was thinking, and catapults into further assumptions (that Clarissa then compared her current state with what could have been, and found it terribly wanting): 'it was middle age; it was mediocrity'. In both examples, the unpartnered dash introduces a subsequent thought which replaces the original. The second dash, to indicate an end to the interruption and a return to the main clause, never comes, because neither Clarissa's nor Peter's mind returns to their original state.

Contrasting this with Woolf's use of brackets, we see in example (3) that the brackets surrounding 'for he saw her look it' mark off the clause, summarising a complicated set of concepts. Earlier in the text, we were given access to Clarissa's thoughts during the incident that Peter is now remembering. During that conversation, Clarissa's mind flutters through many ideas: Peter's habit of criticising her; how difficult it was to decide not to marry him; how the blinds used to flap in her childhood home; how the lake where she fed the ducks figures in her imagination as a setting for her parents to judge what (little, perhaps) she has made of her life. At this moment, the 'look' that Peter later remembers takes place:

> She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. Quite simply she wiped her eyes.
> 'Yes,' said Peter. 'Yes, yes, yes,' he said, as if she drew up to the surface something which positively hurt him as it rose.[76]

This is what Butte might call a deeply intersubjective moment. Peter has seen Clarissa's expression and the tears in her eyes, and has drawn immediate, instinctive conclusions (in the manner discussed by Zunshine) about the intentionality behind this behaviour. When the moment is referred to again, much later in the book, '(for he saw her look it)', then all of this earlier emotion and vulnerability is packed up in the short parenthesis, triggering a memory for both Peter and the reader that contains far more than the short bracketed phrase would seem able to hold. This is a way of rucking up the essential linearity of the written text, making the reader's own thoughts jump backwards and ahead again, reigniting earlier emotional resonances and colouring later feelings.

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[76] Ibid, p. 55.

Woolf often uses brackets in this manner: inserting in a highly concise form a set of thoughts, or an action or a state of affairs that expands to disrupt linearity and crosscut the text. In example (1) above, the bracketed comment '(she had not read his letter)' is similarly brief, but unfolds like a flower bud in water when read in context. Why has she not read his letter? Perhaps because, as we learned earlier when Clarissa muses over Peter while walking through St James's Park; 'his letters were awfully dull', mere 'dry sticks', with little connection to the vivid figure that Peter himself cuts in her emotional life.[77] She knows he will return to England in June or July, and it is already mid-June; her thoughts have been full of him today, and yet now she is surprised: perhaps because she has erected a mental fence between her imagination (in which Peter features strongly) and her day-to-day life (in which he is completely absent). The brief inserted phrase reminds the reader of this earlier information, slicing a shortcut between Clarissa's earlier thoughts of Peter and their present confrontation.

In these instances, the bracketed statement refers to another part of the text for its context, rather like a hyperlink on a web page. If the full set of information was held within the brackets, then that would extend the already lengthy sentence beyond a reasonable level of comprehensibility; or require it to be broken down into several sentences, thus losing immediacy and resonance. As a result, the sentence structures would lose their efficacy in conveying, as Marsh describes, the fleeting, instantaneous nature of thoughts occurring in the mind, whereby a complex proposition can be alighted upon and comprehended without full articulation in words.

As we have already seen, Henry James chose to represent (and highlight) this ability to think without articulating by refusing to enter Maisie's thoughts, because he believed that words could not sufficiently translate her perceptions. By contrast, Woolf is using brief bracketed statements as a form of shorthand to conjure up a complex combination of thoughts, memories, and feelings. Like an overstuffed suitcase, these brackets, once opened, catapult out a shower of contents whose substance seems far greater than could be contained in such a short textual space. They reintroduce remembered thoughts into the characters' minds which then infuse their perceptions of present events. So, as Peter laces his boots in his hotel room, remembering that look of Clarissa's, his recreation of the perceived intensity of emotion between them raises contrasting feelings about his lover Daisy, with whom there is 'No fuss. No bother […] All plain sailing'.[78] To summarise: in *Mrs Dalloway*, dashes often show a transition, as one thought or speech act interrupts and permanently replaces another; whereas brackets encapsulate an emotionally loaded nugget of information that affects

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[77] Ibid. pp. 4, 6.
[78] Ibid, p. 205.

characters' (and readers') interpretation of a perception currently being formed. More succinctly: dashes are used to show how thoughts overwrite one another; brackets to show how existing impressions influence new perceptions.

## 2.4.2 Acknowledging the impossibility of a unified 'self'

There is an interesting parallel here with the illustrations that Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne employ to show how our minds *appear* to form and adjust perceptions.[79] As discussed in the appendix, Dennett and Kinsbourne distinguish between two styles of revisionism: 'Orwellian' (where a perception is subsequently altered or overwritten so that it is then remembered inaccurately); and 'Stalinesque' (where a pre-existing thought influences a new perception at the time it is formed, so that it is always inaccurate).[80] I suggest that Woolf uses dashes in the 'Orwellian' manner, and brackets in the 'Stalinesque'. Considering the Orwellian dash first, we can speculate whether, by the end of the extracts in examples (1) and (3) above, it would be possible for Clarissa or Peter to accurately remember their original frame of mind before the interruption that these dashes herald. The interruption has corrupted their initial thoughts, changing them in later memory. Thus, in example (1), if Clarissa were to think back to the moment before Peter arrived, she will not be able to recapture that mood of irritation ('it was outrageous to be interrupted'), because the burst of emotions that surround Peter's appearance have altered her memory (created a new draft) of what has just occurred.

Widening the scope somewhat, Clarissa might also find herself unable to recapture the feelings and thoughts that she has been having about Peter earlier that day. Her gladness and shyness when Peter walks through the door (which are so strong that they momentarily obliterate her memory of his name) may imprint on the present moment with such force that they change her memories of Peter in the past. Indeed, Marius Hentes, examining the function of 'back story' in fiction, notes: 'Mrs. Dalloway's reminiscences about her earlier love for Peter Walsh and its tragic consequences mean one thing when she thinks he is still in India and quite another when he appears at her house.'[81] Hentes does not elaborate, but I suggest he refers to the difference between the wistful nostalgia with which Clarissa reminisces over 'dear Peter', who could be 'intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on

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[79] Daniel C. Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne, 'Time and the Observer: the Where and When of Consciousness in the Brain', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences,* 15 (1992), 183–247.
[80] Appendix A, section A.7.
[81] Marius Hentes, 'The Forms and Functions of Back Story in the Novel', *Narrative*, 18, 3 (Oct. 2010), 347–366, pp. 352–53.

a morning like this';[82] and the intense frustration which his presence evokes: 'his silly unconventionality, his weakness; his lack of the ghost of a notion what anyone else was feeling that annoyed her, had always annoyed her; and now at his age, how silly!'[83]

Turning now to view Woolf's use of brackets in terms of Dennett and Kinsbourne's 'Stalinesque' style of revision, we find a similar analogy. As explained in the appendix, 'Stalinesque' describes an existing memory inserting itself into the processing of a new perception and thereby perverting that 'original impression'.[84] I suggest that here, Peter's strong emotion about his past relationship with Clarissa influences his perception of the thought that he observed her having ('for he saw her look it'). The text suggests that Clarissa's actual thought at that moment was about the possible waste of her own life: 'And what had she made of it? What, indeed?'[85] But Peter, seeing her wipe her eye, only partially discerns her thoughts and transfers them to himself: '"Yes, yes, yes",' he said, as if she drew up to the surface something which positively hurt him as it rose. Stop! Stop! He wanted to cry. For he was not old; his life was not over; not by any means'.[86] Thus, Peter's memories of his past relationship with Clarissa corrupt his current perceptions of her behaviour, leading him to conclusions not intended by her.

By classifying Woolf's use of parentheses in this way, I do not wish to overstate the connection. I am not suggesting that Woolf slavishly (and miraculously) follows a schematic model created by Dennett and Kinsbourne decades after her death. Indeed, as I discuss in the appendix, Dennett and Kinsbourne would be likely to argue that the distinction which Woolf draws by means of her contrasting paranthetical styles is futile, since they believe any 'distinction between perceptual revisions and memory revisions' is meaningless; a result of the way in which our brain processing 'is spatially and temporally smeared', thus making it only *seem* to us that this is how our thinking operates.[87] My point is, rather, that both she and they are careful observers of mental behaviour, and there are interesting and informative correspondences between their observations.

I wish to take the study of these correspondences further. As discussed in my appendix, Dennett and Kinsbourne argue that 'the question *Orwellian* or *Stalinesque*? (post-experiential or pre-experiential) need have no answer' because there is no

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[82] *Mrs Dalloway,* p. 8.
[83] Ibid, p. 59.
[84] Appendix A, section A.7.
[85] *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 55.
[86] Ibid, p. 55.
[87] Dennett and Kinsbourne, 'Time and the Observer', pp. 191–92.

'Cartesian Theater' in the brain; no 'perfectly sharp' boundary marking off a perceptual event; no definable moment of 'actual conscious experience'.[88] Woolf might have been one of their strongest supporters here. She famously declared that '"I" is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being'.[89] As discussed in my appendix, James Naremore shows that this denial of an essential self that can be circumscribed by a boundary was a driving force towards Woolf's 'very real ambivalence towards the stream of consciousness […] a claustrophobic technique which, for better or worse, imprisons the reader inside a character'.[90] Noting how Woolf objected to Joyce's method because 'it is centred in a self which […] never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond', Naremore suggests that Woolf developed her own 'series of techniques' to reflect her alternative conception of the 'self'.[91] I suggest that the method I have described, of using dashes and brackets to evoke different styles of memory revision, forms part of this series. There is an evident tension: how can a method that reflects the 'Cartesian' sense of a central, unified self be used to evoke Woolf's professed rejection of such a self? But it is exactly this tension that inhabits the character of Clarissa Dalloway. Shannon Forbes has described how Woolf portrays Clarissa trying to bind together an identity within her 'split, fragmented self' through performing the 'role' of Mrs Richard Dalloway.[92] The harder she tries, the more her sense of self slips away. As she approaches the flower shop in Bond Street, contemplating the different course that her life might have taken, Clarissa 'had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being […] only […] this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more'.[93] Later, dressing for the party, she purses her lips in the mirror 'to give her face point. That was her self — pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible'.[94] Even at her party, greeting her guests at the height of her performance as successful hostess, she cannot grasp a satisfying sense of self: 'It was too much like being — just

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[88] Ibid, p. 192. A full discussion of the 'Cartesian Theater' can be found in Appendix A of this thesis, section A.2.3.

[89] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 6.

[90] James Naremore, 'A World Without a Self: The Novels of Virginia Woolf', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 5, 2 (Winter 1972), 122–34, p. 123. This is further discussed in Appendix A, section A.8.

[91] Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *The Common Reader*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London, Vintage, 2003), pp. 146–54, p. 151.

[92] Shannon Forbes, 'Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Victorian "Self" in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway'*, *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 38, 1 (Special Convention Issue, Spring 2005), 38–50, p. 39.

[93] *Mrs Dalloway,* p 13.

[94] Ibid*, p. 47.

anybody, standing there; anybody could do it'.[95] As Forbes points out: 'Clarissa cannot locate the self she desires within the confines of her performance.'[96]

Stephen Howard also reads the book as an acknowledgement of 'the impossibility of providing a single, total, and final account of a person's self'.[97] Drawing attention to Clarissa's rejection of a stable, single-faceted identity ('she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that') in favour of something more amorphous ('being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best'), Howard points to the beginnings of a form of 'group identity'.[98] Clarissa herself, as Peter Walsh remembers, came up with a 'transcendental' theory in their youth: 'It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction; not knowing people; not being known.'[99] Waving her hand from an omnibus at Shaftesbury Avenue, Clarissa declared, he recalls, her connection with everything around them:

> She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter — even trees, or barns.[100]

This defines Woolf's method for the novel as a whole: displaying Clarissa's disparate non-unified self through a set of brief, glancing encounters as she goes about her daily business. Dennett, with his belief that our shared use of language to interact with each other has enabled us to conceptualise our mock-Cartesian sense of self, might find much to applaud here.[101] The narrative methods that Woolf uses to represent a non-unified 'self' made up of interactions with others have clear applicability for my own extension of Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' theory: the 'Provisionality Principle'. This, as laid out in my appendix, proposes that deafblind people may be consciously aware, as a result of their interactions in society and in a way that others are not, of the provisional nature of each perception and the possibility that other coexisting interpretations may be more appropriate.[102]

Woolf's attitude towards the interactive nature of subjectivity does not only inform her narrative methods. It also informs her view of the relationship between writers and readers. As readers, she says, our job is first to 'receive impressions' and

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[95] Ibid, p. 223.
[96] Forbes, p. 44.
[97] Stephen Howard, 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: Reflections on the Self in Virginia Woolf', *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 8, 2 (2007), 44–54, p. 46.
[98] *Mrs Dalloway,* pp. 10–11; Howard, p. 52.
[99] *Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 199–200.
[100] Ibid, p. 200.
[101] A discussion of Dennett's ideas can be found in Appendix A, section A.6.
[102] See Appendix A, sections A.7 and A.8.

then to 'pass judgment' in order to 'frame a rule that brings order to our perceptions'.[103] Dennett might point out the lingering Cartesianism of separating the activities of perceiving and judging which are, by his lights, necessarily entwined.[104] Nevertheless, it is still through some combination of these activities that Woolf considers readers to engage with writers:

> The standards we raise and the judgments we pass steal into the air and become part of the atmosphere which writers breathe as they work. An influence is created which tells upon them even if it never finds its way into print.[105]

For Woolf, no consciousness is isolated; the boundaries are infinitely porous. Now, having dissected particular narrative techniques used by James and Woolf, and considered their applicability for representing the consciousness of a deafblind character, I wish to investigate this reader-writer boundary further.

## 2.5 Enlisting the reader

A novel trying to convey the experience of deafblindness must find ways of co-opting the reader into the enterprise. Both Woolf and James employ specific techniques to encourage the reader to engage with the text. First, I will look at how James makes the reader an active participant in his endeavour.

### 2.5.1 Jamesian word play

Randall Craig has drawn a parallel between Maisie's journey from 'a passive consumer' of language to 'a discriminating and sentient observer' and the reader's journey to similar 'hermeneutic sophistication'.[106] Craig gives many examples of Maisie's attempts to 'read' her situation and posits that the reader 'must replicate Maisie's interpretive and linguistic proficiency'.[107] He suggests that, to enable this, James 'provides linguistic hurdles that foster reading competence'.[108] Craig's first example occurs when the narrator describes a very young Maisie pondering over her father's friends' teasing description of her legs as 'toothpicks':

> The word stuck in her mind and contributed to her feeling from this time that she was deficient in something that would meet the general desire. She found

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[103] Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?', *The Second Common Reader*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 258–70, p. 266.
[104] This is discussed in Appendix A, section A.7.
[105] Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?', pp. 269–70.
[106] Randall Craig, '"Read[ing] the unspoken into the spoken": Interpreting *What Maisie Knew*', *The Henry James Review,* 2, 3 (Spring 1981), 204–12. p. 205.
[107] Ibid, p. 209.
[108] Ibid, p. 209.

out what it was; it was a congenital tendency to the production of a substance to which Moddle, her nurse, gave a short ugly name, a name painfully associated at dinner with the part of the joint that she didn't like.[109]

As Craig notes, 'James forces readers along a circuitous route to arrive at the simple word "fat". In doing so he underscores the connection between the riddles which the world presents to the child and those which the novel offers to the reader.'[110] Building on this example, Craig identifies a further element left for the reader to elucidate in Moddle's response when Maisie asks whether other children's legs are also toothpicks: '"Oh my dear, you'll not find such a pair as your own." It seemed to have something to do with something else that Moddle said: "You feel the strain — that's where it is; and you'll feel it still worse, you know."'[111] Craig glosses this:

> Moddle's response is appropriate to the immediate context of Maisie's question, but it is also relevant, as the narrator points out, to the larger situation in which her parents place a rather severe strain upon her. This usage of 'pair' is made explicit for the reader, and the ambiguity is multiplied for Maisie, when Mrs. Beale repeats it: '"They're a pretty pair of parents"'. Mrs. Beale obviously excludes herself, but refers to whom? Beale and Ida? Claude and Ida? The perceptive reader will also recognize, having seen the courtship of Sir Claude and Mrs. Beale herself, a proleptic reference to Maisie's stepparents. Readers, like Maisie herself, must learn to read and to understand the obscurities of social discourse.[112]

Such word play is patterned throughout the novel, requiring the reader to make active links and connections. Craig notes how both Ida Farange and Mrs Beale 'use hostile stares to defend their own dereliction of parental duties',[113] and suggests that when Maisie mispronounces the street near the British Museum as 'Glower Street' (rather than the correct 'Gower Street'), she may be pronouncing it to match her excitement 'in the glow of such a spirit',[114] but the reader, mentally voicing it to rhyme with the correct version, makes a link 'which connotes ominous atmospheric and emotional effects' and thus connects 'glowing expectation and glowering fulfillment'.[115]

Craig also identifies James's use of pronouns as example of word play that requires work from the reader, pointing out that the referents are sometimes made deliberately vague, such as when Mrs Wix tells Sir Claude that an unnamed 'they' had been waiting for Ida in the carriage:

> Sir Claude broke into a laugh — Maisie herself could guess what it was at: while he walked about, still laughing, and at the fireplace gave a gay kick to a

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[109] *Maisie*, p. 40.
[110] Craig, p. 209.
[111] *Maisie*, p.40.
[112] Craig, p. 209.
[113] Ibid, p. 210.
[114] *Maisie*, p. 138.
[115] Ibid, p. 210.

displaced log, she felt more vague about almost everything than about the drollery of such a 'they.' She in fact could scarce have told you if it was to deepen or to cover the joke that she bethought herself to observe: 'perhaps it was her maid.'[116]

Craig unpicks the meanings here:

Mrs. Wix has used the sexually neutral 'they' to avoid the unpleasantness of directly referring to the latest of Ida's lovers. […] The joke goes on for several pages before Mrs. Wix, 'amid flying splinters' of honesty, produces the name — Mr. Tischbein [table leg] The incident recalls Moddle's foreshadowing of the strain to be placed on Maisie's toothpicks and the shattering impact of parental irresponsibility.[117]

Thus, as Craig concludes: 'The linguistic texture of the novel compels readers into increasingly active interpretation'.[118] This requirement is signalled by the title of the novel itself: 'The unspecified referent is not clarified, and the pronoun "what" is translated into an interrogative by readers wondering what Maisie does in fact know'.[119] Such embedded methods of leading the reader to actively engage with what is not fully articulated offers a promising avenue here for writing about the unfamiliar (to most) experience of deafblindness.

### 2.5.2 Woolfian tonal cues

Having begun my earlier discussion of Woolf with a reference to what Harker calls her mastery of 'inwardness', I now introduce the outline he provides of an opposed critical viewpoint that emphasises her focus on the external world.[120] Harker fuses these 'competing strains'[121] to conclude that Woolf's true interest is in 'the tenuous points of connection between the inner and the outer worlds'.[122] He traces a 'connecting thread' of mismatched information between inner thoughts and external realities, suggesting that each has 'a common origin in tropes of confusion, misperception and error'.[123] As evidence, Harker chronicles episodes of misperception within Woolf's work, positing that 'the intellectual form of vagueness or confusion in Woolf's theory of fiction has its basis in the imperfections of the perceptual faculties and the vagueness and confusion they engender'.[124] Commenting on Harker's analysis, Jean-Michel Rabaté concludes that 'he shows that if reality is made up of our perception of the world, it should also

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[116] *Maisie*, p. 189.
[117] Craig, p. 210.
[118] Ibid, p. 210.
[119] Ibid, pp. 210–11.
[120] Harker cites Zwerdling, Gaipa, Olsen and Banfield. (pp. 1–2.)
[121] Ibid, p. 4.
[122] Ibid, p. 2.
[123] Ibid, p. 4.
[124] Ibid, p. 8.

include our distortion of it, taking into account our delusions and mistaken perceptions'.[125]

Harker notes the conflicting observations of the grand motor car entering Buckingham Palace with 'a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery […]. But nobody knew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales's, the Queen's, the Prime Minister's?'[126] Septimus Warren Smith, entering the story at this point, hears someone say it is 'the Proime Minister's kyar'.[127] His wife, Rezia, wonders if it is 'the Queen going shopping?'[128] Clarissa Dalloway decides: 'It is probably the Queen. […] The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar.'[129] The external event of a passing grandee sets into contrast the different mental world of each character. Rezia and Clarissa both choose to believe that the passenger is the Queen (implying that in their feminine spheres of life Royalty is more interesting than politics), but their different social status is marked by what business they imagine her to be about; shopping or charitable engagements. Meanwhile, Septimus has the paranoid reaction that it is he himself who is exciting the crowd's attention, thus foregrounding his mental instability from the first: 'Was he not being looked at and pointed at […] for a purpose?'[130]

The question of who is actually in the car is never answered. Instead, the crowd's attention is diverted to a new source of confusion: the aeroplane that soars through the sky as:

> out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters. But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? […] and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, and E, a Y perhaps?[131]

While others guess at products being advertised ('Glaxo', 'Kreemo', 'toffee'), Septimus once more takes the situation personally: 'they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words […] but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty'.[132] Again, no definitive answer is given. That these external events must have their own factual integrity is not in doubt, but individuals' apprehension of them is shown to be dependent upon personal circumstance: perception is far from neutral. A telling example, to add to those mentioned by Harker, is the nineteen-year-old country girl,

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[125] Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Editor's Introduction', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34, 2 (Winter 2011), v-vii, p. v.
[126] *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 17.
[127] Ibid, p. 18.
[128] Ibid, p. 19.
[129] Ibid, pp. 20–21.
[130] Ibid, p. 19.
[131] Ibid, p. 25.
[132] Ibid, p. 27.

Maisie Johnson, in London for the first time and about to ask for directions when she is shooed away by Rezia, who is ashamed of her husband's behaviour: 'waving her aside, lest she should see Septimus'.[133] But Maisie Johnson, lacking the life-experience that might have helped her interpret the situation correctly, sees Septimus and Rezi as 'quarrelling, perhaps; parting for ever, perhaps'.[134] Remembering her family's warnings about the dangers of London, she is frightened for her own safety. We don't learn the details of her past that distort her perception of this situation; but it is clear to us that such exist, and that they affect her judgement of what she sees.

Harker borrows Banfield's term 'possibilities never actualized' which describes the many minor characters in Woolf's work (such as Maisie Johnson) who are given names and a momentary spotlight over their consciousness and are then allowed to sink back into oblivion.[135] He extends the term to illuminate these differing perceptions of external events:

> What is important, though, is that these unactualized possibilities are founded on perceptual limitations: the inability to see the skywriting clearly or to see through the darkened glass [of the car window] is the cause of the unactualized possibilities in *Mrs. Dalloway*.[136]

Harker defines such perceptual or cognitive errors as 'emblematic of the relationship between the inner life and the exterior world — a relationship mediated by physical limitation'.[137] The relevance of this to the deafblind situation, in which, as I discuss in my appendix, perceptual errors are endemic, is clear.

In Woolf's work, the mediation of this relationship between interior and exterior worlds is, I suggest, often conducted in textual terms through the use of brackets. In my earlier discussion of her use of parentheses, within section 2.4, I asserted that Woolf often uses brackets to show how existing impressions influence new perceptions. Now I will outline another way in which brackets are used: to tie together the inner and outer world, linking a train of thought with a concrete action. An example occurs when Mrs Dempster watches Maisie Johnson reeling from her encounter with Septimus and Rezia. It sends Mrs Dempster into a flurry of thoughts about her own marriage: 'For it's been a hard life, thought Mrs Dempster. What hadn't she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too. (She drew the knobbed lumps beneath her skirt).'[138] The somewhat metaphorical flight of her musings is pulled up short by the acute physicality of those 'knobbed lumps'. Whereas my earlier discussion showed brackets being used

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[133] Ibid, p. 33.
[134] Ibid, p. 33.
[135] Harker, p. 15.
[136] Ibid, p. 15.
[137] Harker, p. 18.
[138] *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 35.

to circumvent narrative linearity by allowing an earlier thought to intervene and affect the formation of another; this usage ties the non-linear thought-world into the temporal linearity of the external physical world. It does so by interjecting external objectivity (Mrs Dempster moving her ruined feet) into personal subjectivity (her self-sacrifice within marriage). Throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, the balloon-like expansion of characters' inner thoughts is always tightly pinned into place by such moments of external specificity. Despite the extraordinary elasticity of time within characters' heads, the reader never loses track of the precise progress of time in the external world. Harker's point about inwardness and externality is that Woolf does not prioritise one over the other. Instead, the manner in which she knots them together 'lays bare the imperfection of one's knowledge of the external world and of the inner life'.[139]

Such distortions and misperceptions continually affect us all in life, as discussed in my appendix. For the majority they go largely unrecognised whereas deafblind people are likely to gain a more foregrounded awareness of their existence.[140] This focus on the imperfection of perception brings me back to Zunshine's point about 'Theory of Mind': that although we cannot avoid placing interpretations upon other people's behaviour (because we have an inbuilt tendency to assume there is intentionality behind it), this does not make those interpretations correct. Zunshine refers to Dennett's observation that:

> watching a film with a highly original and unstereotyped plot, we see the hero smile at the villain and we all swiftly and effortlessly arrive at the same complex theoretical diagnosis: 'Aha!' we conclude (but perhaps not consciously), 'He wants her to think he doesn't know she intends to defraud her brother!'.[141]

Yet, as Molly Hite has shown, our ability to draw such conclusions within Woolf's work is frequently blocked. Hite describes how Woolf deliberately omits or perplexes the tonal cues that allow readers to discern what attitude they should adopt towards a scene or character. In evidence, Hite presents alternative responses to the character of Clarissa Dalloway as sympathetic centre of the novel or as callous snob; claiming that these different readings 'indicate how a lack of authoritative tonal cues can lead to conflicting interpretations of a character and even an entire novel'.[142] In this context, Hite dissects the introduction of Septimus and notes the 'slightly untethered piece of free indirect discourse' that describes his beaten-dog-like appearance: 'the world has

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[139] Harker, p. 5.
[140] Appendix A, section A.4.
[141] Daniel C. Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 48.
[142] Molly Hite, 'Tonal Cues and Uncertain Values: Affect and Ethics in *Mrs Dalloway*', *Narrative*, 18, 3 (Oct. 2010), 249–75, p. 254.

raised its whip; where will it descend?'[143] As Hite points out, this 'is a question that might be asked by the hypothesized strangers made apprehensive by Septimus's facial expression', yet:

> there are also implications that it is a free indirect discourse version of Septimus's own continual question, although it is never wholly his own. […] Because the question wobbles somewhat in its imputation of its origins, it leaves open one of the motivating thematic issues of the novel. To what extent are the scourges of the narrative universe real, and to what extent delusory?[144]

Hite suggests that through such uncertainties, Woolf draws her readers into interaction with the text because we cannot pin down a single standpoint and are thereby provoked into noticing and questioning norms. She regards Woolf's novels as 'tonal labyrinths, conveying varying degrees of authoritativeness', which therefore 'allows us to experience the complexity along with the urgency of ethical and political questions'.[145]

This uncertainty, Hite believes, encourages readers to engage more deeply with the work. Such active engagement, for both James and Woolf, in their different ways, is perhaps essential in any work that focuses on the workings of the mind. Having looked now at both narrative techniques and methods of enlisting the reader, I wish to summarise my argument so far, before turning to discuss its application for my own engagement with representing a deafblind consciousness.

## 2.6 Summarising the argument: a preparation for practical engagement

This first chapter of thesis began by examining the political context surrounding the portrayal of deafness and blindness in fiction. This led into an indicative literature review that exemplified and categorised figurative uses of sensory loss and identified a significant gap in representation. The second chapter examined the innovative techniques employed by Henry James and Virginia Woolf as they pioneered new ways of representing consciousness. Having explored methods that could inform a more phenomenological representation of deafblindness, and drawing upon an investigation into the effects of deafblindness on consciousness that is laid out in the appendix; I now come to assess how these distillations have contributed to my own writing.

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[143] Hite, p. 256; *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 18.
[144] Hite, p. 256.
[145] Ibid, p. 254.

# Chapter 3. What lessons apply to my own writing practice?

### 3.1 Overview of chapter

In this final chapter, I relate this research to my own writing practice. I begin, in section 3.2, with an overview of how my original creative conception changed as a result. In sections 3.3 and 3.4 I discuss specific ways in which I have applied my theoretical learning to my creative work. Section 3.3 explains how I came to use a blend of three narrational techniques, which I have characterised as: first, experiential (influenced by Henry Green); secondly, intersubjective (encouraged by Henry James); and thirdly, subversive (stimulated by Virginia Woolf). Then in section 3.4 I look at a set of structural devices that draw upon methods used by Woolf and James to co-opt the reader into the interpretive process. Finally, in section 3.5 I sum up my work and briefly discuss theory-driven directions for future work. A synopsis of my novel, *Kindness is a Language*, can also be found in Appendix B.

### 3.2 One theme, two novels

The process of researching and writing this academic thesis has been a significant consciousness-raising experience for me, which in turn has had a fundamental effect on my creative approach to writing about deafblindness. The process has not been an easy one. Through the development of a transformed understanding of not only the ontology of sensory loss (what I think sensory loss *is)* but also its epistemology (*how* I come to think that*);* I have been forced to confront structural prejudice within my own mind and its concurrent effect upon my writing. Thus, there has been an often-frustrating circular process of discarding and reimagining, which has at times seemed to actively inhibit my creative process. Ultimately however, this engagement between theory and practice goes to the very heart of practice-based research, and the painful period of instability and destruction that it produces is a necessary driver for eventual innovation.

My original plan for this novel was to tell a story involving Ellie, a girl born, like me, with Usher Syndrome Type II: a genetic condition that causes moderate-to-severe deafness from birth, combined with progressive sight loss over the following decades. The novel, as originally envisioned, was intended to cut between three different timeframes: Ellie's 1970s childhood in Yorkshire, during

which she and those around her learn to deal with her deafness; her 1980s adolescence in London, when she discovers that she is also going blind; and, the culmination, a journey across China at the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, where the socio-political environment, rife with misperceptions and misinterpretations, reflects Ellie's own approach to life. However, it became clear that this cross-cutting was interfering with my desire to illustrate the developing effect of Ellie's sensory impairments on her thoughts and behaviour. I then moved to a tripartite scheme, with consecutive sections covering each of these periods. This, too, proved unsatisfactory: each section demanded more space than this equally-compressed plan would allow. I found that the initial section, far from being a preliminary to the main story, became the meat and bones of my purpose. It was in the evocation of Ellie's childhood that I could find the evolution of her consciousness, and I required a novel-length space in which to work through this. After many reformulations, what was one novel became two. This thesis includes an extract from the first novel, and the examples I give here will therefore be taken from that, but I will also refer to the second novel where necessary. Both novels have grown, intertwined, from a single combined academic and creative enquiry. Each in its own way is a subversion of a prejudicial trope of sensory loss and together they form a unified theme about understanding ourselves in relation to others.

The narrative arc of the first novel, *Kindness is a Language,* is an expression of my belief that isolation is not the result of being different, but of a refusal to accept that others experience life differently. Ellie shifts between the idealised perfection of an imagined acceptance by her unknown father, and the embattled reality of growing close to Isaac, a boy her own age. Both the ideal and the reality are shattered as the novel reaches its climax: a violent and misguided attack by Isaac on an infirm neighbour. Complicit to different degrees and for different reasons, fourteen-year-old Ellie and Isaac are split apart by the repercussions. Ellie can no longer retreat into the comforting reinforcement of her illusions about her father, because his involvement forces her to face him as he is. With her previously unrecognised sight loss now revealed, Ellie — and the reader — are catapulted into questioning the part she has played and her interpretation of events. This uncertainty is set against Isaac's judgmental dogmatism; estranging the two beyond hope of reconciliation.

The second novel, *Betray and Lie and Massacre*, supplies the contrast: insight is achieved when we accept that others experience life differently. Ellie's fight against casting herself as she feels others want her to be (an enforced

normalcy, in Davis's terms) takes place amongst a swirl of deceit and denial on both personal and political levels in 1989 Hong Kong and China.

## 3.3 Narrational techniques

*Kindness* aims to draw readers into both empathising with Ellie and cognitively grasping how she experiences the world. The overt focus is on her deafness, because her sight loss is unacknowledged until later in the novel, although its effects upon her behaviour should be clear upon looking back or re-reading. In order to take on this challenge, I worked on reframing certain of the techniques examined in this thesis. Determining what narratorial standpoint to take was a pressing question, and my research led me to weave together three forms of narration, which draw upon elements from *Caught*, from *What Maisie Knew*, and from *Mrs Dalloway*.

### 3.3.1 Experiential narration (Henry Green)

In section 1.7.3, I designated Green's style in *Caught* as 'oblique' because it portrays the experiential qualities of hearing loss without foregrounding the fact of the impairment. I admired the subtlety with which this conveys 'what it is like' to have a hearing impairment and, as a result, I modelled one strand of my narrational style in this way. My opening scene, in which five-year-old Ellie discovers Nana unconscious in their back yard, provides an example. Told from Ellie's point of view, it contains many experiences that owe much of their particularity to hearing loss, but are not signposted as such. Only at the end of the scene is Ellie's deafness made clear to the reader. Sparingly threaded through the novel, at an additional four turning points, are further scenes in this style. This immersion in Ellie's experience is intended to build empathy in the reader and to add weight to Ellie's voice in its relation to other characters.

Within my discussion of Green's work, I called attention to Tandon's and Treglown's reiteration that in Green's fictional world there is no certainty about what people are thinking or feeling. This sense of ambiguity about context is one that I also wished to evoke within these experiential scenes, in which Ellie is responding to the actions and perceived intentions of others, without any direct insight (for either Ellie or the reader) into what their actual intentions might be. To intensify the intuited effects of this, I removed speech marks to lessen the distinction between speech and thought and to reiterate the way in which perception and judgment are entwined as a single process. I also chose to shift

tenses within these scenes, since each covers an event of intense emotion for Ellie and I found that using the present tense helped build immediacy and impact.

Initially, I also experimented with moving from Green's third-person perspective into the first-person, thinking that this might enhance the evocation of Ellie's personal experience, but (as James found with Maisie), I discovered that the close third-person point of view gave me more scope for highlighting aspects of Ellie's experience that she could not herself articulate. It also had the advantage of maintaining unity with the preponderance of the novel, which uses the second of my three forms of narration, as I will now come on to discuss.

### 3.3.2 Intersubjective narration (Henry James)

Whereas Green creates an invisibly hearing-impaired world entire, I am trying to signal impairment-related differences between Ellie and other characters. To do so, I turned to the second style in my blend: an intersubjective approach that grew from my study of Henry James. Encouraged by my construal of Aczel's commentary on James's narrative approach, as discussed in section 2.2, to focus on 'how' to tell the story rather than on 'who' is telling it, I moved towards a subjective, composite narratorial voice for the main body of my novel. This approach emphasises the way in which each character imagines the mental stances of others by interpreting behaviour through the filter of his or her own expectations. As discussed in section 2.5.2, with reference to Zunshine's investigation into 'Theory of Mind', this is an in-built feature of the human brain. Yet, as Zunshine also points out, it in no way implies that a correct interpretation is reached. The fallibility of the interpretations that all my characters form is an important element of my novel, and I found that this Jamesian method allowed me to highlight how each character's perception is refracted through an intensely personal set of referents. The result is an ongoing state of miscommunication.

In section A.4 of the appendix, I suggest that such miscommunication takes on particular complexity when a sensory impaired person is involved. Ellie's impairments affect her ability both to perceive and to control the interpretations of others. James's style gives the ability to show how one character perceives intentionality in another, then reflects it back through their own modified behaviour (what Butte refers to as 'nested narrations').[1] Learning

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[1] Butte, p. 131.

from this, I have attempted to use a composite voice to show the particular asymmetric quality of that intersubjectivity when it involves Ellie.

### 3.3.3 Subversive narration (Virginia Woolf)

Finally, I chose to punctuate these two styles of narration, the empathetic Greenian and the intersubjective Jamesian, with a third: the apparently objective report. This takes the form of documents, such as Ellie's audiology report, Nana's funeral notice, or letters between characters. I had a reason for this beyond the simple provision of an economical way to advance the plot or convey important information. I found that it opened up an opportunity to draw upon Woolf's use of supposedly objective realities to highlight their inevitably subjective interpretation.

As discussed in section 2.5.2: *Mrs Dalloway* contains events whose objective 'truth' must exist, but is never shown, such as the letters drawn in the sky by an aeroplane, or the important personage being driven into Buckingham Palace. Her characters subvert and misinterpret these events (forming their own opinions about which letters are written, or who is in the car) by imposing their own subjectivity upon them. Woolf's technique is to avoid showing the 'fact' in order to heighten the subjective effect. My purpose in choosing to display the 'fact' is similar, even though the method is reversed. A careful reader is intended to recognise uncertainties about these 'factual' documents: such as inaccuracy (for example, the social worker's report asserts that Mrs Ray is 'eager' to foster Ellie, which the reader soon sees is not the case); or contingency (as in the communications tips pamphlet, which contains valuable information, yet proves useless since it goes unread). Woolf's subversion of simple perceptions highlights their essential subjectivity. My version is intended to underline the universality and inevitability of misinterpretation.

### 3.4 Structural devices

Together, Woolfian subversion, Jamesian intersubjectivity and Greenian empathy are the three significant learning points for my narrative style. Each is a building block in my attempt to show Ellie's gradual recognition of the uncertainty within all her interactions, or in other words, her enactment of the 'Provisionality Principle', which suggests that the crucial difference between the deafblind mind and the non-sensory-impaired mind lies not in the greater likelihood of

misperceptions but in the deafblind person's conscious awareness of the constant possibility of such misperception.[2]

Having constructed a narrative method, I needed to make the reader an active accomplice in the process. In section 2.5.1 I discuss Craig's contention that James's Maisie and the reader make parallel journeys towards a 'reading competence'. [3] I too wish to guide my reader towards re-enacting Ellie's journey across both my novels, to the point where a conscious awareness is reached both of the ubiquity of misperception and of the concomitant impossibility of drawing finite conclusions about behaviour and intentionality. To help achieve this, I have adopted techniques derived in part from those used by James and Woolf to co-opt the reader into their texts.

### 3.4.1 Provisionality and parenthesis

In section 2.4.2, I examined the ways in which Woolf uses parenthetical marks and how these reflect our (misleading) 'Cartesian' conception of our own thought processes. In doing so, I compared Woolf's method to Dennett and Kinsbourne's 'Orwellian' and 'Stalinesque' models of thought, which they use to represent our mistaken intuitions about our perceptions.[4] I suggested that this has the effect of foregrounding the way in which Clarissa Dalloway tries to create a unified sense of self where none can in fact exist. While working on *Kindness*, I experimented extensively with reformulations of Woolf's method, believing that this might help me to show how Ellie, as a deafblind person, moves towards a conscious awareness of this non-unity through having to constantly change her interpretation of her interactions.

In the opening scene of *Kindness,* five-year-old Ellie wakes to find her world gone awry. Small details suggest that the morning routine has not been followed, leading to the devastating discovery of Nana collapsed outside. At first, Ellie lies in bed, following her usual habit of enjoyably scaring herself by 'seeing' a dragon in the pattern of seeds and flowers on her bedroom curtains (in the manner of the optical illusions discussed by Kleege in section 1.8). Brackets are used to show the reality behind the illusion: the dragon 'winks one veined eye (a red seed peeping from autumn leaves)'. That prosaic awareness places limits on Ellie's fear of the imaginary dragon. But as the scene moves on and Ellie's

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[2] The 'Provisionality Principle' is outlined in Appendix A; sections A.7–A.8.
[3] Craig, p. 209.
[4] Dennett and Kinsbourne's ideas are discussed in Appendix A, section A.7.

unease grows, this usage reverses. The dragon becomes the physical 'reality' within the brackets: 'Ellie stares at the grey sacks. (Far off, a dragon's low rumble). Thick-ankled not-sacks in grey woollen tights.' Now, the already-existing fear attached to the dragon seems to affect Ellie's new perceptions, conditioning her to revise her understanding of what she first 'sees'. What is concrete and what is imagined switch places.

Turning now to Woolf's use of dashes to reflect new perceptions replacing old ones: I have adapted this for use in the intersubjective sections of the novel. I do so in two principal ways: single dashes to signal omission and paired dashes to mark out contradiction. First, I use a single dash to suggest the unvoiced elements of thought that may be at odds with, or cast a new light on, what is voiced. At its simplest, this occurs when a character's discomfort causes them to break off mid-speech or mid-thought: 'Ellie felt the blood fizz hot in her ears. Had she — ? No. She shoved out doubt as quickly as it flared.' At other times, it signals a mental jump to a potentially incorrect conclusion: 'Maybe it wasn't her at all, but something else — Isaac there, playing the fool under his desk?' Although unfair to Isaac, whom the reader knows has just taken a risk to help her, Ellie's leap to judgment is not unjustified from her own partial perspective and this technique means that the reader enacts it with her. At other times still, these non-paired dashes are used to mark the missing consonants in what Ellie hears: 'Ay! Uh — ih — ah!!' Consonants are voiced at higher sound frequencies than vowels (and are consequenty harder to hear for those who, like Ellie, have high-frequency hearing losses). They also provide most of the meaning in the English language, and therefore these dashes help signify the importance of the omission.[5] They contrast with the use of ellipsis ('…') to indicate when other characters are not paying attention to speech elements, but could choose to tune in at any moment (and may in any case, unike Ellie, be getting the gist of what is said).

Secondly, I use paired dashes to mark out elements of thought that are at variance with the general tenor of perception.

The old lady bent down to pinch Ellie's cheeks with cold, swollen fingers, and exclaimed loudly, 'BISCUIT!'
Ellie […] shrank away from her, not noticing the liver-spotted face fall.

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[5] The importance of consonants in speech comprehension is explained to Mrs Ray by an audiologist in a later part of the novel.

> 'She's just had her breakfast, Vera,' Mrs Ray said — oh, so it'd been a question, Ellie thought, and wished she could have one — 'We'll get on.'

Such interpolations contribute to the intersubjective style by showing the flow of reaction and interaction as characters take on new interpretations.

As the novel progresses, it becomes evident that for Ellie, the 'overwriting' process must remain incomplete. The new perceptions signalled by dashes do not fully replace old ones; an element of doubt remains so that other interpretations constantly surface. In support of such uncertainty, the bracketed thought-intrusions within the Greenian episodes further disrupt her perceptions and throw doubt on her conclusions. The dragon becomes a motif, a suggestion of unease and danger, which gradually comes to represent not just one specific incident but the greater uncertainty of the provisionality of perception itself.

### 3.4.2 Textual patterns, tonal cues and 'unfinalisability'

I wish to link this process of constant reinterpretation to my discussion in section 2.2 of Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky. Noting how Dostoevsky refrains from letting characters summarise each other into 'second hand and finalizing definitions', Bakhtin describes his method as a recreation of the 'authentic unfinalizability' of one consciousness by another.[6] I suggest, from my analysis of theories of consciousness in the appendix to this thesis, that because we cannot apprehend another consciousness any other way than through the filter of our own, the 'unfinalisability' of another's character is in considerable part due to the 'unfinalisability' of our own perceptions. These sensory perceptions, contrary to our misleading insights about them, are not a linear progression of discovered truths but a multiplicity of conflicting interpretations. One part of my purpose is to make the reader consciously aware of the conflict. Another, more challenging still, is to have the reader actually experience it. In pursuit of both goals, often the speech of other characters is represented in the partial and confusing way that Ellie hears it. For example, on her first day at school, she hears the class teacher's command as: ' — ullyaw ock uh — '. When she finally interprets this as 'Pull your socks up', she takes it in the metaphorical sense of 'hurry up' or 'get on with it', but the teacher wants Ellie literally to tug up the grey sock scrunched around one ankle. In this example, both Ellie and the reader reach an eventual understanding of what was actually said. At other times this never happens and

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[6] Bakhtin, p. 68.

the reader, like Ellie, has only his or her own interpretation to go on. This is a type of 'linguistic hurdle'; analogous to the ones that Craig identifies in James's work, as discussed in section 2.5.1, and is intended to lead the reader into 'interpretative proficiency'. [7]

The novel's title, *Kindness is a Language*, refers to a quotation often ascribed to Mark Twain: 'Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.' Typing it into a search engine will bring up pages of 'inspirational quotation' websites, with various formulations of this, usually linked to Twain but with no reference to a specific work.[8] There is, in fact, no evidence that Twain did say or write this. Garson O'Toole, investigating the quotation's origins, notes that a version of it was first attributed to Twain by the columnist Walter Winchell in 1942, thirty-two years after Twain's death.[9] O'Toole traces its earliest known origins to a New York newspaper in 1861, which used 'dumb' and 'deaf' rather than 'deaf' and 'blind': 'Kindness is a language which the dumb can speak and the deaf can understand.'[10] This misappropriation and propagation seems entirely fitting for my theme, since, as Chapter 1 of this thesis showed, deafness and blindness have been so thoroughly misrepresented by literature. Part of my reason for choosing the title was that I felt it expressed the need for goodwill (in terms of being hesitant to jump to negative interpretations) in overcoming barriers to mutual understanding. This holds for all communication, but is particularly necessary when involving people with sensory losses. The potential for misconstruing motives is great enough without beginning from a standpoint that desires to think ill of the other. The other part, relevant to this discussion, is that it sets up the reader to voice the missing words 'deaf' and 'blind', in the same way that, as Craig shows and as discussed in section 2.5.2, James encourages the reader to voice the word 'fat' in connection with Maisie.[11]

Of course, 'kindness' in relation to deafblind people also has more pejorative connotations. Panara's category of 'the deaf accepted with

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[7] Craig, p. 209.

[8] For example; top of Google's listing on one particular day: 'Mark Twain Quotes', *BrainyQuote* <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marktwain106287.html> [accessed 23 October 2015]

[9] Garson O'Toole, 'Kindness is a Language Which the Deaf can Hear and the Blind Can See: Mark Twain? Christian Nestell Bovee? Anonymous?', *QuoteInvestigator* <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/10/26/kindness-see/> [accessed 23 October 2015]

[10] Ibid, n.pag.

[11] Craig, p. 209.

humanitarian spirit and sentiment', and Jernigan's category of 'blindness as foolishness or helplessness' are testament to this. In Chapter 1, I grouped both under the attitudinal category of objectifying people with sensory impairments through moral judgment. This prejudicial attitude is also relevant to my purpose. Although I deliberately avoid resorting to clichéd metaphors of blindness or deafness (blind luck, deaf to reason and so on), it is unlikely that I have completely escaped the normative tendency to ocularcentrism or audism: as Chapter 1 showed, this is deeply embedded in our language and culture. Even less then, can I expect readers to be free of such associations: in any case, they form part of the societal attitudes that shape Ellie's thoughts and behaviour. Thus, by pushing the reader towards this voicing of 'deaf' and 'blind', I acknowledge and invite this inevitability.

I weave this 'voicing' effect through the novel with a naming pattern that includes people and places. Place names in the novel reference tropes of blindness and deafness. For example, Stonethorpe, where the Rays live, and Batkirk, which houses the hospital in which Nana dies and where Ellie attends audiology appointments, both allude to common phrases for sensory loss ('stone deaf' or 'blind as a bat'). The significance of names in the novel is signalled by Mrs Ray when she recalls her anxieties over her husband's choice of the name 'Isaac' for their youngest son, since this appears to be an unflattering reference to their ages and the unexpectedness of the conception.[12] The names of many characters refer to vision or sound in some manner, and Ellie's name, Eleanor Linnet, to both. 'Eleanor' is linked in several popular baby-naming sites to 'shining light'.[13] 'Linnet' refers to the bird, with its 'melodious song'.[14] The contrast with Ellie herself, whose deafness makes her singing voice more akin to a donkey's bray than a songbird's trill, is made within the novel. Nana's name is Clara, which again on popular baby-name sites is given the meaning of 'bright' or

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[12] This conversation is not in the extract included with this thesis, as it occurs later in the novel.

[13] For example, <http://www.baby-names-meanings.net/meaning/eleanor.html> [accessed 23 October 2015] The Oxford Dictionary of First Names has Eleanor as a respelling of Alienor, containing an element of 'other, foreign', which, since deafness and blindness have been so consistently Othered, also fits my theme. *The Oxford Dictionary of First Names*, ed. by Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle and Flavia Hodges, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[14] 'Linnet', *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.* <https://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/l/linnet/> [accessed 24 October 2015]

'clear'.[15] Ellie's mother is Dawn, and her father is Lucian, which is widely linked to 'light'.[16] Lucian's surname is Langhorne, and his mother's family is Clemens. The two names are linked in the architectural firm in which he is a partner with his uncle: Langhorne Clemens. This, being Mark Twain's real name, links back to the associations of the title. Like Ellie, Isaac Ray's name is linked to both vision (a ray of light) and sound, since his first name, as explicitly mentioned in the novel, has the idea of 'laughter'. The bible story referenced in Chapter 1 by Jernigan also links the name 'Isaac' with 'blindness'. Through the same bible story, Jake Ray ('Jake' being short for 'Jacob') is linked to the practice of deceit in relation to the blind. The milieu is thus one of unspoken sensory loss.

This ties into the hidden issue of Ellie's sight loss throughout *Kindness.* Her reduced visual fields and night-blindness in fact shape much of her behaviour, making her appear clumsy, preventing her from noticing gestures or movements around her, and interfering with compensations that a fully sighted person would make for being deaf. This, in turn, accentuates her deafness and feeds into to an incorrect assumption, which other characters (in particular Mrs Ray) form, that Ellie must at times be 'playing it up'. It is also a crucial factor in the violent climax of the book, when Ellie is slow to react to Isaac's assault upon Mr Pierson. The attack is the result of a combination of deceits and misunderstandings amongst many of the characters. The discovery of Ellie's sight loss casts a new slant on her previous actions, and means that the reader, like Ellie herself, must reassess everything that has happened in the light of this new information. Many characters have played a part in the wrongful attack, but how to allocate the blame is an 'unfinalisable' process.

I have also taken note of Hite's suggestion, discussed in section 2.5.2, that Woolf deliberately perplexes tonal cues in order to make it difficult for a reader to discern what stance they are expected to take towards a situation or character. Hite shows that this makes readers work harder than we otherwise might, and therefore engage more deeply with the work. An element of such deliberate muddying of the waters is also part of my narrational choices. Whether in the empathetic passages from Ellie's point of view, or in the intersubjective scenes where characters are at odds over their interpretation of a

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[15] For example, <http://www.baby-names-meanings.net/meaning/clara.html> [accessed 24 October 2015]

[16] For example, <http://www.baby-names-meanings.net/meaning/lucian.html> [accessed 24 October 2015]

situation, I have deliberately tried to avoid creating a hierarchy of interpretations: so there are not tonal cues leading the reader to simply accept one character as tending to be 'correct' and reject another as more often mistaken. I nevertheless hope that the reader will be seizing upon behaviours and implied intentions and fitting them to these questions in order to build potential explanations. In the course of confronting misunderstandings and misperceptions, and by gradually coming to expect interpretations to change (and holding more than one interpretation in mind), my intention is for the reader to share (to some extent) Ellie's developing awareness of the complexity and the fallibility of the interpretive process itself. Success on this front, at even a minor level, would be a significant step on the journey that I would like the reader to take into the deafblind world.

### 3.5 In conclusion: future directions for deafblindness

In parallel with the envisaged reader of my novels and my deafblind protagonist, I have also taken a journey of discovery. This thesis marks the route that I followed and I believe that it also signposts several directions for future work. My analysis of existing fictional representations of sensory loss within Chapter 1 proposes an attitudinal approach towards categorisation that I believe could be usefully developed and applied across other areas of disability research. In addition to highlighting the sociopolitical nature of disability constructions, this would enable a comparison between the attitudes that predicate different disabilities, and how they interact. Also within Chapter 1, I envisage a fruitful bringing together of empirical research within the separate fields of social cognition and psycholinguistics, fused with a disability studies philosophical orientation. Taken further, I suggest that this may have potential to expose more fully the means by which metaphors of disability are culturally instilled and propagated.

My enquiry into the effects of deafblindness on consciousness within the appendix to this thesis follows a controversial direction that has emerged within the study of disability. As discussed in section A.5, this casts the experience of disability as a complex interaction between 'impairment effects' and 'disability effects', thus identifying both biological and social factors. Firmly rooted within the mindset that the eradication of social oppression must remain the primary goal of disability activism, my enquiry is not intended to justify medicalised deficit models of disability. Rather, I wish to stress the importance of accepting the

embodied nature of human consciousness in general as a background for enquiring into the deeply contextual and specific nature of every individual consciousness in particular. By this means, I hope that a radical change of perspective towards disability may eventually be achieved: a societal mindset that no longer sidelines disability nor construes it in opposition to 'normality', but that constitutes impairment as an essential element of human diversity. Tom Shakespeare talks of the 'ubiquity of impairment', calling it a 'universal phenomenon' not only because 'every human being has limitations and vulnerabilities' and these tend to intensify with age, but also because, as the Human Genome Project has shown, we all contain hundreds of genetic mutations that predispose us to illness or impairment.[17] Impairment, actual or potential, is contained within us all.

Used to inform future approaches to the study of consciousness, this understanding of impairment as a central part of normality has the potential to play a transformative role. Deafness and blindness should be accepted by philosophers of mind as the commonly occurring and infinitely varied modes of experience that they are. Then, instead of being used to delineate a narrow version of 'normal' consciousness, the study of their effects offers broader insights; grounding the philosophical understanding of phenomenality within the neurobiological understanding of cognition.

Finally, I hope that it is unnecessary to say that there can be no finalising encapsulation of deafblindness within fiction. My enquiry into narrative methods and their applicability to the representation of sensory loss within Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis will, I hope, become just one of many and varied approaches. As Dennett has declared, 'We tend to forget that *our* ways of thinking about the world are not the only ways, and in particular are not prerequisites for engaging the world successfully.'[18] An enriched appreciation of what is now considered minority experience is the foundation for understanding, *per* Davis, that 'normalcy' is only another construction: there is no unified 'majority' experience. Each of us is a minority of one and our own experience is shaped by a complex interaction of determining biological and cultural forces. Nature and society together provide an endless multiplicity of material. Freed from the rigid constraints of a long history of being defined in terms of metaphor, blind and deaf people have a wealth of experience to share.

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[17] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, p. 87.
[18] Dennett, *Kinds of Minds*, p. 146.

# Novel Extract: *Kindness is a Language*

A 20,000 word extract from *Kindness is a Language,* a novel by Penny Rudge.

# Prologue

### November 1976

Sunrise slicing through the curtains and still Nana has not come. Five-year-old Ellie squints from her sheets, summoning a dragon from the faded pattern. Nana doesn't know he's there, though she knows his name. Morris, she said one time, nodding at the spiky print, and when Ellie's alone, Morris the dragon hunches his gold-green wings and winks one veined eye (a red seed peeping from autumn leaves). He breathes smoke, then fire (the faded material darkens, then gleams, as a cloud scoots across the sky) and turns to look down his long amber nose into Ellie's fright-wide eyes.

Nana! Ellie squeals as her spine stiffens.

Nothing. Nana doesn't come.

Blinking hard, Ellie holds Morris back, makes him vanish. She sits up, chews a nail, considers. Wrongness edging out the ordinary (are those thorns on a stem, or a scaled tail twitching?) With a leap, she is clear of the bed, nightie hitched up and strong legs flashing white; thump thump thump across the floor. Nana!

Stale air on the landing, shut in all night, and the bathroom looming icy-dark. Nana always cranks up the boiler first thing, but the towel that should be crisping is floppy and damp, and the lino is toe-clench cold.

Nana! Jumping over the see-saw floorboard that Nana says croaks worse'n a frog, Ellie thrusts open Nana's door, then dithers at the gloom. Nana?

Up up uppity up! Ellie shouts as she races over the knobbled rug-fringe and rattles back the curtains. But when she whirls round, the bed is empty and Nana's rose counterpane stretched tight. Streaming past, daylight splashes on to the button-stool where Nana sits to rub her puffy knee of a morning: a heave and a groan, then she's zipping up her red housecoat, but that's still there, folded in a neat square over the sag. All wrong. Ellie's knuckles are damp, pressing into the puddle on the wooden sill. Drips are pooling, because the window hasn't been

opened. Why? Nana's routines are set like church bells. Even when you don't hear them, you know they're there.

Ellie shoves at the handle, bashes the window open so hard it smacks against the brick. She has to dangle out to grab it back. There's Mr Ray, coming out from next door. Thick neck bulging over his Sunday collar, shiny head bare. He spots her, and his grey-spattered beard ripples as he lets out a bellow. Is he angry? Ellie ducks back inside.

Naaaaanaaaaaaaaa! She bumps down the stairs on her bottom, the carpet scratching through her nightie.

The door into the kitchen puts up a fight, but she plunges through, pushing aside a sack of rubbish. Freezing wind, straight off the moors, whooshes around her legs. The back door is open. More binbags out there, wetly bulging. Ellie stares at the grey sacks. (Far off, a dragon's low rumble.) Thick-ankled not-sacks in grey woollen tights, slumped across the yard. She tries to shout, but her breath just whistles in her chest.

Nana is face down with slimy leaves stuck to her cardie. Ellie kneels in the dirt. There's a bare pink patch in Nana's rain-flattened curls. She stretches out a hand. Nana?

Fingers catch round her middle. Ellie screams and thrashes about, but she's dragged back across the slippery stones. Panting breath hot in her ear. She twists, and bites, hard as she can, tearing free.

Aggghrrrr! A scream and a growl all together. (The cry of a beast. Dragonroar.) Low winter light scalds Ellie's eyes as she lifts her arms to ward off the attack.

But it's not an animal, it's Jake, the Rays' middle son. Clutching his arm and staring at her with horror in his bright blue eyes like *she's* the wild thing. He's nine years old and wiry-strong, she tenses in case he tries to grab her again, but he's calling out over her head. Mrs Ray scuttles across the yard, folding her long spiny legs to crouch down at Nana's side.

Mrs Ray's thin lips are stretching. Ellie strains forward forward but the wind whips away the sound.

NanaNanaNana! Ellie doesn't know if anyone can hear her. Mrs Ray takes her by the shoulders and steers her back inside.

Stick of ice, Mrs Ray says, at least that's what Ellie thinks she says. It's what Nana always says when Ellie's cold. Jake jams his bright blond head through the door, watching Ellie from under lowered brows. Mrs Ray goes out again. Jake rummages through the cupboard, bringing out a bag of sugar. He shakes some into a mug, then adds a teabag, keeping well clear of Ellie. A cloud's gathering at the nose of the kettle, though Ellie didn't see him flick the switch on. Maybe it was Mrs Ray did it. Maybe it's been on all the time.

It's boiling, she says. Mustn't let it go dry.

Jake's eyes wander past the kettle like he doesn't know what it's for. Maybe he doesn't. Sheila Ray's a slave to those lads, Nana says. He leans back when Ellie reaches up to turn it off.

You have to pour it out, Ellie tells him. A five-year-old can't do that, Nana's rules. Maybe a nine-year-old can't either, Ellie's not sure. But he fixes her with a blue-gold stare, then tips the steaming spout. Tea brewing. it's how morning smells.

Nana? Ellie says it quiet, like a shiver. Nana?

Jake's got hold of her again, but not hard, not like before. His arm flinches when her head flops against it, but he stays put. Hey. Shhh.

She wipes her nose in a smeary trail across his jumper. He smells like lemons. Ellie wants rosewater and stale ciggies. She wants Nana.

Only now Jake's stepping away and hurrying to the other door, the front one that sticks. They don't use that one. She tries to tell him, but he doesn't listen, and then she sees it's open as a thick wail blares around them. Mr Ray is blocking the way, big legs planted across the doorstep; waving his arms over his head. His eldest, Malachi, is next to him, broad and tall for eleven, arms windmilling too, just like his dad. They don't know Ellie's there. No one does,

until Isaac, the youngest of the three brothers, pokes his white curly head between all the legs and stares through at her, grey-green eyes unblinking.

There's a flurry, then Jake pulls her back as two men in dark uniforms stamp past. Raised voices collide. Ellie waits, her arms puckering like chickenskin, and then they thud back with a stretcher between them. A pile of blankets topped with Nana's flattened grey hair.

Wait, wait, cries Ellie, but Mrs Ray stands in her way. Long, stringy hair falling over her mouth. Her rough hands chafe Ellie's shoulders. Ellie gapes at her and Mrs Ray lets go and yells out.

Isaac's white head sets off upstairs, floating up the bannister like a ghost. Nana doesn't hold with nosey-parkers, he shouldn't be doing that but Ellie can't stop him. She tries but no one hears her.

Mrs Ray is gabbling, squeaky and fast like a cartoon. Mr Ray interrupts with a low boom. The older boys dash for the kitchen, bumping into each other in the doorway. Jake gets through first and comes out with the long, curly telephone cord stretching behind him. The echo of a high-pitched ring bounces round Ellie's skull. Voices eddy overhead, she is drowning in the noise. Isaac glides back, mouth moving. She scrabbles at his eyes with hers, searching for a lifeline, but they're glassy, there's nothing to catch on to. He thrusts something heavy at her. A towel, no, her dressing gown. Mrs Ray bundles it on, guiding her arms through like a doll's.

With sudden sureness, Ellie pulls away. Her fingers squirm into a pocket, clutching at wires. A square box at one end, with its plastic clip, she draws it out. Dangling loose, the moulded ear-pieces bob below. She scoops them up, and pushes them into place. A click, a swell of sound, and then the noise retreats as words rush in.

# Part One


# 1977

# Ear, Nose and Throat Department

## Batkirk General Hospital, Dunstan Street

**Paediatric Assessment**
Tel. (0274) 17264 / 19382

Director: Professor T. D. Joyce
Consultants:
Dr. A. V. Panara
Dr. Robert Lodge

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Please quote in all correspondence:       495/9Y/AJ

4 Jan 1977

Mrs E. Jernigan
Assistant Case Worker
Kirkby Children's Social Services
North Yorkshire County Council

Dear Mrs Jernigan,

Following our telephone conversation earlier today, I have summarised the relevant details for future reference.

Eleanor Linnet, now aged five, has a moderate to severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. This means that there is permanent damage to the cochlear cells in both inner ears. Both the volume at which sounds can be heard and the clarity with which they are heard are affected. Eleanor has been fitted with a high-powered body-worn National Health hearing aid.

The initial diagnosis took place in February 1974, shortly before Eleanor's third birthday. Eleanor had recently come to live with her grandmother and suffered a fall, resulting in a broken collar bone. As a result of concerns raised at that time about her communicative abilities, she was requested by the Accident & Emergency department to visit her GP for further investigation, who then referred her to me.

Her grandmother, Mrs Clara Linnet, was adamant that this fall was the cause of the damage to Eleanor's hearing. This may or may not be the case. In more than half the presentations of this type of hearing loss, no cause has been ascertained, and there may be inherited factors of which we are not aware. Thus, Eleanor's deficiency may be acquired (for example through trauma or infection) or it may be congenital (inherent from birth). Nothing is known about her medical history before diagnosis, or about her paternal heredity. I understand that no family history of deafness has been observed in the maternal line.

In response to your specific questions, Eleanor presents with normal intelligence, and there is no reason why she should not attend a mainstream school. As far as I am aware, Mrs Linnett's decision to educate Eleanor at home was a matter of personal choice rather than of incapacity on Eleanor's part.

Eleanor is under my care at the Ear, Nose & Throat Department within Batkirk General, and should continue to attend our Audiology clinic for regular checks and hearing aid maintenance.

Yours, etc.


Alan Panara

## *January*

'Isaac?'

He didn't answer, so she tried again

'Isaac? Isaac?'

'What?' He had to force down his mouthful of cereal. 'Stop shouting. I'm right here.'

Now she was staring at him, eyes like bruises under the tangled black-brown hair. Kneeling up there on the kitchen counter, she looked like a bony cat. He'd been told off for getting impatient with her, but why did she have to drag it out every time she spoke to him? Scraping out his bowl, he waited, mulish.

'Isaac?' His eyes weren't on her, so Ellie said it again. It didn't occur to her that he could listen without being warned to tune in. 'Who's that?'

'Who's what?' With a loud sigh, he climbed on his chair to look through the window.

A long, lanky man had stopped Mrs Ray at the gate. He had a floppy face like an old dog. Ellie knew where he lived, at the end house, on the other side of the Rays to her and Nana. He always snatched off his hat and nodded when Ellie and Nana went past, but every time Nana acted like he wasn't there. Once Ellie asked about him and just got a Never You Mind shake of Nana's grey curls.

A frosted flake dropped from Isaac's open mouth. 'Don't you even know that?'

How should Ellie know if Nana never said?

'— eer-un —' Isaac sat back down and picked up his spoon.

Deertun? Beerdun? She didn't catch names just floating about in the air, they had to be said carefully while she watched the lips. 'What?'

'Mam just this minute told you she's off round his now.' Isaac stared at the plastic box clipped to Ellie's front. 'Is that working right?'

Ellie hunched away and pulled a thick handful of hair over her face. The movement caught a wire and tugged one of the ear-pieces, making her wince.

'— meant to squeak like that?' Isaac said.

That gave Ellie a shock, because she'd not known anyone else could hear a sound so deep in her head. She turned round again. His eyes were like muddy pondwater, she couldn't see past the surface.

It was unnerving for Isaac being gawped at. 'Why are you weird?' he demanded.

'I'm not,' Ellie said. 'You are.'

She was still staring, as if something about him didn't add up. Isaac's hackles bristled. 'It's definitely you.'

Out in the yard, Mrs Ray was snappish. 'I'm coming, I'm coming. You don't have to hurry me along. I've got a lot on at the minute.'

'I can see that.' Mr Pierson rubbed his long nose. 'Aunt Vera says not to worry if you're pushed today, she'll manage.'

Mrs Ray knew full well that meant Vera going without her bath, which was no answer. 'I said I was coming, didn't I?'

But Mr Pierson's eyes were sliding past her, towards Ellie's dark head in the window. Abruptly, he asked, 'How's she going on?'

'Well it's hard.' For all of them, but Mrs Ray didn't get into that. 'We're strangers to her, near enough.'

Mr Pierson shifted his weight from one spindly shank to another. 'Mrghm. Not the girl. Clara. Your pastor says she's on the mend.'

'Taking credit for it, is he?' Mrs Ray gave him a sideways look. 'You'd best go down't hospital and visit. See for yourself.'

There'd been a lot of talk when Colin Pierson and Clara Linnet started going together. Him only forty-odd and her pushing sixty, Hard to say which'd been taking advantage, but it wasn't right. Mrs Ray wasn't one for gossip, but it'd been no surprise when there was a bust-up, only that it took as long as it did.

A tic was blinking at Mr Pierson's eyelid. He cleared his throat and said that he didn't think — Clara wouldn't —

'Oh, don't fret yourself.' The twitching was unsettling, Mrs Ray gave way. 'She'll be up and about any day now, doctor reckons.'

Adam's apple jerking like a knot drawn tight, Mr Pierson said 'Mrghm. That's, mrghm.'

It turned into a fit of coughing, spittle clinging to his loose lips. Mopping it away with a none-too-clean hanky that made Mrs Ray itch to snatch it off him, he glanced back at the window.

'Clara's under an obligation to you, Sheila.' He sounded sour. 'Taking the girl in like this. It's more than could be expected.'

'Well, someone had to.' Mrs Ray didn't let on that Sam had said exactly the same. Or that she was beginning to agree. 'Anyway, won't be much long — oh, for heaven's sake, what now?'

Shrieks were breaking through the glass.

'I'll have to leave it till later, Colin. Tell Vera — ' Mrs Ray didn't finish. The screeching was getting louder as she rushed back inside.

Ellie had Isaac in a headlock, overwhelming his blondness like a shadow. Dragging him to his knees, she pummelled at the shirt riding up his knobbly back.

'You soft or something?' Jake jeered from the stairs. Over his shoulder, he yelled upwards: 'Malachi! Mal! Isaac's getting battered!'

But it wasn't Malachi who came thumping down. It was their dad in his thick-soled slippers, none too pleased at being roused. He was on lates this week, so they were all supposed to tiptoe about.

'What's going on?' Beard bristling, Sam Ray folded his big arms.

Sheila was too busy yanking Ellie away to give him an answer. And in any case, she'd no idea. The little girl was wild with temper. Dark hair whipping like a headful of snakes, she flung herself down to the lino and hammered at it with tight fists.

Sam turned on his youngest son. 'Isaac! What'd you do?'

'Nothing!' Isaac backed away, clutching his thin neck. 'Honest, Dad. I didn't lift a finger to her.'

'I should hope not!' Sam Ray was a hefty man. He'd broken up a fair few fights in his time, but never one involving a skinny bit of a lass. 'Are you all right, little Missy?'

Ellie's fury was wearing out. She peered up through a tangle of hair, casting him an uncertain look. Mr Ray thought of resting a hand on her head, in a calming way, but her elbows flew up, batting him off. Always so quick to sort out his sons, he backed off, shooting his wife a flummoxed look, and headed up the stairs.

Mrs Ray went after him. 'Sam! Are we just going to let her get away with this? Again?'

'What's to do?' The bannister creaked under the weight of his arm. 'She doesn't understand. I'd be like him next-door, kicking that dog for what it can't help.'

Mrs Ray ducked round him, not letting him escape. 'She understands well enough. Her from the Social showed you what the doctor said. Nothing wrong with her brains.'

Mr Ray fingered his speckled beard. 'Aye. Fat lot of good that is if you can't get through to them. How are we supposed to make her mind us? Hand signals?'

'She's not a dog, Sam.'

He was put out. 'Did I say she was? It'd be a sight easier.'

There was no dealing with him when he was like that. Mrs Ray left him to crawl back into bed, and went down. The boys had all scarpered, leaving Ellie hunched on the floor, a sulky heap in front of the cooker.

'Ellie, Ellie.' Mrs Ray squatted down. 'I've told you, you can't just lash out like this.'

'Don't want you.' A small, stubborn chin stuck out. 'I want Nana. When's Nana coming home?'

'Soon, love.' Mrs Ray sighed and heaved herself back up. Couldn't be too soon for any of them.

# Kirkby Gazette

## Obituaries

**Linnet, CLARA ELEANOR of Stonethorpe.
On Feb 9th, 1977, peacefully in her sleep at
Batkirk General Hospital, aged 64 years.
Service at Stonethorpe United Reformed
Church on Friday 18th February at 2pm.
No flowers, please. Donations may be
given at the church.**

*February*

'There ought to be flowers.' Ellie glared down the aisle. Cold light striped the wooden pew-ends. 'There was for my mam. Lots and lots, Nana told me.'

That had been three years ago, so Ellie couldn't remember it herself. Mr Ray, following hard on her heels, could. As they took their places up front, he was harking back to how he'd muttered to Sheila that it looked like a blooming wedding, didn't Clara have any sense of decency? Well, this time there was no fault to find. The pews were full but the church was bare.

He and Sheila were bookending the row, all four children jammed in between. Mr Ray heard Jake tell Ellie that everyone was giving money for the new font instead. Her bottom lip stuck out, and Malachi chipped in that it was a good cause, dad had said so.

'No he didn't.' Isaac piped up. 'He said —'

Knowing full well what he'd said: that at least one good thing was coming out of this whole sorry business, Sam gave his youngest son a warning nudge. How'd Isaac heard that anyway? He was the very devil for latching on to what he shouldn't.

Luckily Ellie wasn't. 'Nana would've wanted flowers. Red ones.' She twisted for a better look round the pews. 'She wouldn't have wanted all this lot gawping. Who asked them?'

Sheila leaned across. 'Sssh. They knew your Nana, Ellie, they're —'

She stopped short at 'friends'. Clara Linnet hadn't held on to many of those. She'd even fallen out with the pastor, who was the mildest of men. Turning up at church again after years of absence, with a badly behaved toddler in tow, she'd had a public to-do with him over letting the child roar and rampage through the service. The pastor had only been trying to give Clara a hint, but she'd worked herself up into a huff and flounced out. Sheila hadn't seen it for

herself, so she didn't know all the ins and outs. She'd been at home nursing one

or the other of the boys through the whooping cough. At any rate, Clara hadn't

brought the child in again. Which must be why Ellie didn't know any better than

to climb over the pew to get a better look round. Sheila had to drag her back and

get her facing forward again. Her pinafore was all creased. And one of the silver

clips in her dark hair was dangling loose. It looked bad; as if Sheila had taken

less trouble over Ellie than the boys with their crisp shirts and smooth blond

cowlicks. But before she could do anything about it, the pastor was stepping out,

hands spread wide.

On and on he went, stop start, stop start, like a boiler gone wrong. Ellie

stared up at the high windows, waiting for this to be over, and missed everyone

standing up to sing. One of the boys elbowed her and she scrambled to her feet,

oblivious to the rumble of sympathy that passed along the pew behind. Her neck,

pale as pouring cream under bunches of brown hair, looked spindly and frail

among the rosy blond Ray boys.

'Poor little mouse,' someone whispered. 'Where'll she go now? Hasn't

she got anyone? It's a terrible shame.'

Mrs Ray darted a glance at Ellie, but thankfully the child hadn't caught a

word. Just as well, because the whispers went on, under cover of rustling pages

and the organ striking up. It wasn't any more than Sheila and Sam had said to

each other often enough. Clara Linnet had been a shiftless neighbour and a

slipshod mother. If she'd done even a halfway decent job, then Dawn wouldn't

ever have fallen for Ellie in the first place. But with the child here, never mind

she'd not a blessed idea what was being said, it didn't sit right. Sheila's grip on

the hymn sheet tightened. She was glad of Sam's deep voice ringing out to beat

down the chatter.

Neither Isaac nor Ellie had been given a sheet. Ellie tried to peer at

Jake's but he twitched it up in front of his face to cover a jaw-splitting yawn.

Catching it off him, Ellie felt her mouth wrench wide before Mrs Ray's hand

clapped over it, tingling Ellie's teeth with her wedding ring.

More upping and downing. Ellie always a step behind. This endless shuffle made her want to leap up and shout. Catching Jake looking at her, she pinched her brows into a sulky glare that dared him to jolt her out of it. With his halo-gold hair and bright teasing eyes that spun mischief out of nowhere, he was the liveliest of the brothers and the best looking to Ellie's mind, even if he wasn't as big and strapping as Malachi. Bluer than a peacock's tail, Jake's glances could fan a smile out of nowhere. Ellie's had sprung up without her knowing, even before he drew his cheeks in and cast his eyes up to look holy like the pastor. Then she let out a snort that brought Mrs Ray's bony hand down on her shoulder.

Exchanging a warning look with her husband, Sheila Ray willed the pastor to speed up. She'd had doubts all along about getting Ellie through this, but Sam didn't think they'd got the right to keep her off. It'd been the danger of her getting upset that Sheila was ready for though, not giggles and mucking about. This'd give everyone behind plenty to whisper about. Mrs Ray reached over the boys to give Ellie's shoulder another firm squeeze.

It had an effect. Ellie felt disapproval and got herself in hand by fixing on Isaac's singing. His high, pale voice stood out from the rest, just like his white hair. It stripped out everything, even the lost, lonely feeling of no Nana. Swept along, Ellie joined in as the first bit came round again.

'— An' you're Isaac, I'm Jesus —'

With a jolt, Isaac went off on a dud note and stopped short. Not even wincing, Ellie galloped on. Could she not hear her own tuneless bray? His gaze slid down to the beige box clipped into the front of her dress, wondering what it did to the sound. Mangle it, must do, else how could she listen to herself making that din? He glanced round, and saw that everyone else was pretending not to notice, except Jake, who was making faces at Malachi, tipping him into a snigger. Their dad's massive hand swiped across, fetching Malachi a smack that shut him up smartly and left Jake smirking behind his pew sheet.

The poke she got from Isaac gave Ellie a start. His breathy whisper was just a cluster of *ssschwsh*, like a kettleful of steam, but its heat knocked her

back. She frowned him down. *Ssschwsh*. He did it again, bending towards the microphone on her chest. And then, with pent-up force; under cover of everyone sitting back down. *SSSCHWSH!* The spray of sound tightened into a sharp, hard dart, '—onky!' Ellie didn't know what to make of it. Copying the boys, she sank down into a kneeler cushion.

Isaac leant across, mouthing frantically through the clatter: 'Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus!'

Ellie got the force but that was all. Fish-mouth lip-shapes. Not enough to make words.

'Not What You SAID — !' His voice rose, pushing the meaning through.

Puzzling under the insect buzz of prayers, Ellie felt the blood fizz hot in her ears. Had she — ? No. She shoved out doubt as quickly as it flared, but when they all rose for the next hymn, she kept her lips tight shut, even though it was one that she used to shout with Nana when the floors got scrubbed. *I am weak but thou art mighty* and the foaming brush scratchity scritch on the lino. Dreamy, she followed the spear-shafts of light crisscrossing from the high window-slits. *Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me tillIwantno***NO!** —

'**NO!**' Overlapping with *nomore.* '**SSSSSSHHHH!**'

Even then, it took a poke in the ribs to make her stop. Ellie hadn't even realised that she was singing. The furious scrunch of Isaac's white eyebrows — it was true. He'd meant don't sing. Ellie flushed like a burnt beetroot. The swept-away feeling of belonging had gone, she was out on her own.

Peering round, she found eyes on her; Mrs Ray's, worried; Jake and Malachi's, bursting to laugh; and behind them, all those smug, staring stranger-eyes singling her out. Her temper, always on the simmer, boiled over as the organ died away.

'YOU'RE ALL A LOT OF FLAMING BUMHOLES!'

For an endless moment Mrs Ray couldn't move or speak, it was so awful. A blanket of silence covered them all. As the pastor gave the signal to sit, Sheila

thought perhaps it was going to pass off, perhaps they were all going to pretend nothing'd happened. Until Ellie threw herself down with a shriek that stretched from the altar to the crumbling font and lay screaming on the stone floor, pummelling the hassocks and kicking out with a fury that made the wooden pew tremble.

'Oh dear Lord, the bairn's run mad!' muttered a voice from the row behind.

Mouth set so tight that it disappeared into the bushiness of his beard, Mr Ray bent and hauled her, shouting and drumming, over his shoulder. Keeping his eyes straight ahead, he marched down the aisle. Faces turned to watch them pass. Ellie saw them as a moon-like haze over his broad back and screamed all the louder. Her desperate wriggle as he let go with one hand to lift the heavy latch almost made Sam drop her. He clutched on tight and as someone came to his aid and unhooked the door, he felt the small body slump. The screaming stopped with unnerving abruptness and the kicking too, so that he was afraid he might have gripped too hard; done some damage. Staggering down the steps, he set her on her feet and knelt clumsily in front of her.

'Not hurt you, have I, little Missy?'

Ellie stared back, unable to make out the sounds filtering through the maze of his beard. Her head was busy with what she'd seen during the pause at the door. A flower head, red with papery leaves, blazing from a buttonhole. A Christmas flower, Nana's favourite, there'd been one on their mantelpiece the day she got carted away, its pot weighing down the hook for Ellie's felt stocking. That had sucked all the fight out of her; all she could think, staring at the sunken eyes and droopy cheeks of the buttonhole's owner as he creaked open the latch to let them through, was, *him?* How could he know?

Worried that he'd scared her, Mr Ray tugged at his beard, then felt about in his pocket for the tin he kept there. Peering into the red-streaked eyes standing out against the little girl's pallid skin, he held it out.

'— ow — ow — oheee?'

Toffees. She knew the black and silver lettering. He meant her to take one. After pushing a finger in one ear to settle a loose ear-piece, Ellie obeyed. The glossy paper made a satisfying rustle. She sniffed back leftover tears and, as the hardness gave way to chewy syrup, she caught a noseful of the tobacco woodiness that always hung about Mr Ray. Somewhere from inside it all there rose the faintest sweet-stale trace of Nana.

Mr Ray's bushy beard split into a grin. 'Better, eh?'

Wider than usual, his mouth let out clearer sound. Ellie gave him a small smile.

'That's the spirit.' Mr Ray didn't know when he'd last felt so relieved.

Getting back to his feet with a grunt, he found Colin Pierson watching them from the top of the steps. In the ordinary way of things, Sam had no time for the man, but just now he'd been glad of a hand with the church door, and so he went back up to say as much.

Mr Pierson got in first, nodding towards Ellie. 'Sweeties, eh? My old dad would've skelped my hide for an exhibition like that.'

'I'm not her dad.' Mr Ray lost the urge to thank him. It hadn't been all that strong to begin with.

Chewing on her toffee, Ellie watched with concentration in her reddened eyes.

'More's the pity,' Colin said. 'We can hear the howls when she throws a wobbly, you know. Right through the walls. Aunt Vera doesn't feel so bad about the odd bit of yapping from ours now.'

Mr Ray supposed this was payback for when he'd stormed over in his dressing gown after a week of nightshifts and told Colin that if the barking didn't stop, then he'd wring someone's neck and it wouldn't be the bloody dog's.

'There's a sight of difference between a dog and a child,' he said now, with a sharpness that somehow managed to slice away at his own conscience — *a dog'd be easier* — while seeming not to cut into Mr Pierson's at all.

'Mrghm.' Colin's smugness was undercut by the need to stop and clear his throat. 'Auntie Vera's had Pom Pom in her bag during Mass, time and again. Quiet as a mouse. Priest never blinks an eye,'

With a careful gait that didn't deceive Mr Ray any more than did the overpowering stink of extra strong mints, Colin stumped down the steps towards Ellie. The points of the red starburst on his chest stood out against his saggy clothes, it was all she could see. Swallowing down the last of the toffee, she raised her eyes to his drooping mouth, ready to catch him speak, but he didn't even spare her a glance.

Mr Ray came to stand by her. 'All right, little Missy?'

She didn't catch it exactly, but there was a friendly look in his eyes, so she nodded.

'That's the spirit. Never mind this lot, what do they know? We understand each other, don't we?'

His big hand dropped to her shoulder, giving it a squeeze. Ellie turned and found that people were trickling out from the side gate to the graveyard. Some threw curious glances towards her, but most pretended she wasn't there.

'It's all over, then.' She looked down at the tufts of grass edging her shoes.

The rumbling from Mr Ray's beard said nothing to her. His wife, shepherding the three boys through the gate, was too far away, and didn't hear it either. But Sheila saw Sam's face and stopped where she stood. She knew that look. It meant he'd made up his mind to something.

----------------------- CONFIDENTIAL -----------------------

North Yorkshire County Council

Child Placement Welfare Report: Summary Page

8 Mar 1977

### Child Details

*Forenames*    Eleanor Clara    *Family Name*    Linnet

*Age at Visit* 5 years    *Date of Birth*    12/03/1971

*Gender*    Female

### Reason for Referral

Death of primary carer (maternal grandmother).

Eleanor's grandmother died some weeks ago of complications following myocardial infarction. Eleanor has no other close relatives. She was left in her grandmother's care three years ago by her mother, who died shortly afterwards. Father unknown.

### Current Situation

Since her grandmother's death, Eleanor has been under the temporary care of neighbours, Samson and Sheila Ray. There are three other children in the household. Their youngest (Isaac) is six years old. The older boys (Malachi and Jacob) are from Mr Ray's first marriage, and are aged ten and eleven years respectively.

Eleanor was not registered at any school. There are spaces at Stonethorpe Primary, which Isaac and Jacob Ray also attend.

### Assessment of Child's Needs

Eleanor is hard-of-hearing and has been markedly silent throughout my visits. However, this lack of communication appears to stem from mistrust rather than inability. Eleanor's care to date has been isolating, and this may be a factor. There is a clear need for her to have a more socialised environment.

A medical assessment (see attached report) shows that Eleanor can be expected to cope with mainstream education given the appropriate adjustments. Stonethorpe Primary has experience with mildly handicapped children, and the headmistress feels they can provide the necessary support (see separate letter).

A family environment would be preferable to the institutional options available. Mr and Mrs Ray are eager to keep Eleanor on a longer-term basis and have made a formal request to do so. During our meetings, Mrs Ray has been very candid about the limitations of their situation, and shows realistic expectations of their role. In my opinion, the family's experience of dealing with bereavement (Mr Ray's first wife died of cancer when his elder sons were very young) and of adjusting to new family members (with Mr Ray's second marriage and Isaac's subsequent birth) are positive factors in this context, as is Mrs Ray's community involvement in providing assistance for an invalid neighbour.

The suggestion also met with qualified approval from Eleanor herself, as far as that could be ascertained.

### Proposed Action

In view of the benefits of a family environment, of Eleanor's own preferences, and of the supportive attitude of the local school, I recommend that Eleanor be placed in the continuing care of Mr and Mrs Ray, subject to all necessary checks and evaluations, and that she commences school attendance without delay.

**_Signature_**  *E.A. Jernigan*

**_Name_**    E. Jernigan          **_Designation_**    Assistant Case Worker


------------------------  CONFIDENTIAL  ------------------------

## *March*

'I'm coming with you.' Arms folded, Ellie blocked the back door. Since she always missed the lead-in to conversations, abrupt starts were natural to her, she didn't know any other way to begin.

It got Mrs Ray's back up; the child was always spoiling for a fight. 'Not now, Ellie. I'm just popping next door.'

Ellie knew that. It was the whole point. Her dark eyebrows lowered, ready to batter down opposition.

Mrs Ray saw the signs of trouble. Her spirits sank, but she tried to head it off. 'Did you hear me, Ellie? I said no. You can come down the shops with me later.'

Ellie'd heard all right. It was Mrs Ray who didn't understand, who never understood anything. At least when Nana said no, it'd been to the right question. Her voice shot up, high and wobbly at the thought of Nana: 'I want to come NOW!'

'Oh, take the poor lass, Sheila!' Sam called from the front room. 'What harm is there?'

Plenty, in Sheila's opinion. Clara must've done that, given in to every whim. It did the child no favours, not in the long run. But she wasn't going to gainsay Sam. Lips pressed tight, she said, 'You'll have to behave yourself, mind.'

It took Ellie a beat to work out what that meant; she'd missed the cross-current of Mr Ray's shout. Then she nodded, keeping her face still to stop her aid from squeaking.

'I mean it.' Mrs Ray thought she was being sulky. 'Start messing about, and it's straight back home.'

Why did Mrs Ray always have to expect the worst? Sticking out her bottom lip, Ellie muttered, 'This isn't home.'

After all Sheila'd done to try and settle her in, that was a slap. She'd just finished altering Ellie's curtains so they'd be a familiar touch. And lined them too, which Clara Linnet had been too lazy to bother with. It was good material, thick and hard to push a needle though. She'd described the pattern to Vera next door, who'd squinted at the fabric under a strong light and said it might be a

William Morris print, must've cost a fair bit. A few yards of cotton lining wouldn't have added much. But that was Clara all over, no consistency.

'Come on then, if you're coming.' Mrs Ray kept her voice neutral; priding herself on the self-control that Clara had lacked.

A straight-out telling off would have suited Ellie better. As it was, she sensed a suppressed emotion in Mrs Ray's tone, but lacked the skills to work out what. Feeling disapproved of and resenting it, she hung back, shadowing Mrs Ray down the alley rather than walking beside her, an obstinacy that Sheila found maddening.

The Piersons' house was the end-terrace. That made it bigger than Nana's or the Rays', so it would have looked better, too, if the back yard wasn't in such a state. Miss Pierson never went out, Isaac had said, which was just as well because she'd have tripped up before getting far. She was very old, nearly ninety, and neither her eyes nor her legs worked properly any more. Her ears were sharp, though: she caught the squeak of the gate and was peering round the back door before they even had a chance to knock. White hair, fluffy and sparse, framed a sagging face, and her cheeks wobbled as she moved her head about, staring right past Ellie.

'Morning, Vera.' Mrs Ray was brisk. 'I've brought a little helper along with me.'

Vera Pierson's damp eyes found Ellie and blinked. Her voice came out in a mumble. Ellie looked to Mrs Ray for help.

'You've not got your teeth in, Vera, she can't understand you.'

The old lady bent down to pinch Ellie's cheeks with cold, swollen fingers, and declared loudly: 'BISCUIT!'

Ellie hated having her head touched, it dislodged her ear-pieces and made them screech. She shrank away, not noticing the liver-spotted face fall.

'She's just had her breakfast, Vera,' Mrs Ray said — oh, so it'd been a question, Ellie thought, and wished it wasn't too late to answer — 'We'll get on, and she'll be quiet and sit in the front room. Won't you, Ellie?'

There was a warning in her tone, but Ellie, tripping over the doorway, didn't pick up on it. The house was icy, even worse than outdoors. Gloomy too, because the curtains were still drawn. Made no difference to old Miss Pierson, Ellie supposed. She went to open them and bashed her ankle on something that was propped against the radiator.

'Careful!' Mrs Ray yelled as she guided Vera down the hall. Would Ellie hear that? Not knowing made her tense. She lowered the old lady on to the stool by the bathtub and dashed back. 'Ellie!'

'I didn't mean to.' Ellie had just kicked Jesus. Or a plaster model of him, at any rate. He'd been in a bad enough way already, with dusty blood-paint dripping down his head and arms. Setting the cross back upright, she reached round it to open up the curtains.

'Ellie!'

The sharpness made her jump. 'What?'

'Just sit down!' How Clara had kept the girl out of trouble, Mrs Ray didn't know. Maybe she hadn't. It would be better all round when the council got her school place sorted. 'And don't touch anything. … Do you hear me?'

The gloom shadowed Mrs Ray's lips, but the tone was as clear as a rap on the knuckles. Ellie snatched back the hand that had been reaching up to touch the big glass dome on the side-table, and picked up a leaflet with a curly cartoon dragon on the front instead.

'ELLIE!' For a second, Mrs Ray considered marching her straight back next door. 'What did I just say?'

A blank look from under dark brows.

'Don't touch, I said — ohhh!' The gushing sound that Mrs Ray had partly registered a moment or two ago was becoming urgent. Pressing Ellie down on to a low chair, she added, firm and clear: 'Just stay put. I won't be long.'

Hurrying back to the bathroom, she found Vera stretched over the bathtub, struggling with the hot tap, which was on full spate. Sheila twisted the

tap shut and eased the old lady back to a sitting position. 'For goodness sake, Vera —'

'I'm a terrible nuisance, I know, dear. Colin's been making noises about foisting me off into a home somewhere.'

'Has he indeed?' The bird-like lightness of the bones under Mrs Ray's fingers was even more of a reproach than the old lady's nervous tone. She lifted away the quilted dressing gown with care. 'Well, that's not his call to make, is it?'

Leaning heavily on Mrs Ray's arm and letting herself be half-dragged, half-lifted over the side of the bath, Vera took a while to answer. When she did, it took an effort. 'I don't know, dear. It's harder to manage … And *he*'s getting worse, you know. I'd never have thought to say it, but things were better when he was knocking around with Clara. At least that took the trouble out of the house.'

Mrs Ray flannelled a hunched shoulder. 'I'll come round to you more often, Vera.'

'No, no.' The old lady sucked in a breath, readying herself for another effort. It was too cold in here to linger. 'You've enough on your plate, Sheila. Have you said anything about it to Sam yet?'

'How can I? He's set on this being the right thing to do. I'd only be letting myself down in his eyes.' Mrs Ray's back twinged as she bent to take Vera's weight. It put a catch in her voice. 'Sam thinks a lot of me, you know.'

'Of course he does,' Vera rushed to sound comforting. 'So he should.'

'I tried to put the social worker off.' Mrs Ray blotted her dry, taking care not to tear skin as frail as damp paper. 'But it didn't work. The more doubts I had, the better she liked me.'

Vera closed her eyes. Purple veins ridged the lids like scars. 'You're in my prayers, you know. You and the little girl both.'

'Well, I hope someone's listening.' Faced with Vera's knotted body in this poky, mildew-stained bathroom, Mrs Ray couldn't help being doubtful.

'Oh, don't worry dear.' Lifting her arms for her dressing gown, the old lady's milky eyes opened as she gave a little chuckle. 'He owes me a favour or two.'

'More than a few, I'd say,' Sheila agreed. The old lady had spent half her life working in Catholic missions in the Far East; giving up only to devote the rest to her thoroughly undeserving great-nephew.

But Vera wasn't thinking of any of that. Her voice cracked with pride. 'I've sent my hundredth Bible, Sheila. Just yesterday.'

'Oh —' Mrs Ray had seen the dragon leaflet in the front room, and would have ripped it up if she'd thought it would do any good. 'You shouldn't, Vera. You can't spare the money.'

'What can a man give in exchange for his immortal soul?' The old lady clasped Sheila's hand, looking earnestly up into her face.

It was to be hoped she couldn't make out the expression on it, Sheila thought. 'All right then, Vera. Let's get you settled with a brew, shall we?'

In the murky front room, Ellie sneezed, twice. The air was thick with dust. Everything was crowded together like a jumble sale, it was hardly her fault she'd knocked the plaster cross over. Keeping her bottom on the chair seat, she craned her neck to get a look at a photograph propped up behind the cartoon dragon. Just of some bird, smudgy in the low light, it didn't interest her. The stuffed ones in the glass dome next to it did, though. Forgetting Mrs Ray's instruction, she bounced up and climbed on to a dented tin box to get a better view. The birds were perched on a branch, heads tilted and beaks open. Half-

expecting to be pecked, Ellie tapped the glass, then screamed as furriness brushed against her ankles. A tiny flame-coloured dragon, with a flickering tongue and a fringed tail. Growling, it flung itself up, knocking Ellie off the tin box.

'Ay! Uh — ih — ah!!' The blurred shout shocked her even more. Starting back, she bumped the table. It tipped, and a body lurched across her, a man's, throwing out a hand to steady the glass.

Trapped under his arm, Ellie wrinkled her nose. He didn't smell very clean. Then the dragon-thing hurled itself at her and she squealed, sheltering behind a baggy trouser leg.

'Quiet boy! Shush!' Mr Pierson's grooved face bent down. He rubbed the bushy red-orange ears and the creature panted back at him.

'Is it a dragon?' Ellie blurted.

'What?' He sounded as if she'd said the most foolish thing imaginable.

'Nothing.' There was a black collar round its neck, Ellie saw that now.

'Quiet, Pom Pom!' He scooped the still-shrilling dog up, and stalked off on long, bandy legs.

'You had a flower,' Ellie called after his back.

It felt like he hadn't heard. But one leg dragged, and then he turned, 'What?'

The tone was just as off-putting as before, but Ellie didn't give up. 'A Christmas flower. In the church.'

'Mrghm.' It sounded like 'mushroom' said very fast, which was confusing, but it cleared his throat and made the rest quite easy to understand. 'The amaryllis. She always liked them.'

'No one else bothered,' Ellie said.

'I wouldn't spare that bunch a thought.' Mr Pierson's dirty fingernails scratched the dragon-dog, making it writhe with pleasure. 'She wouldn't have.'

'Nana didn't think much of people.'

'Give her a plant any day.' Mr Pierson's loose lips twisted into a half-smile, remembering.

For a moment it was as if Nana was here, her soft lumpy body so real that Ellie could taste the stale ciggie smoke.

'— ih?' Mr Pierson's head jerked. '— ayv it her.'

His voice crunched like gravel. Ellie let the sounds shift about, waiting to see if they turned into anything.

'— linnet —'

Her own last name jumped out at her. Following the shadowy line of his arm, she found it stopped at the dome.

'— know a linnet when you see one?' He tapped the glass. '— no better than Clara.'

The birds inside the case were small and mud-coloured. Dingy little things with dirty white streaks on their chests, all apart from one, which had a crimson blaze on its head and chest.

'That's the male.' His finger was unsteady. 'Much the handsomest, of course. A better singer, too.'

Ellie flinched, was that a jibe? Poking between his legs, Pom Pom wheezed at her, pink tongue waggling. The mouldering damp smell got stronger as Mr Pierson bent closer, sallow cheeks drooping. 'What did she say about me?'

He was spraying spit. Ellie couldn't turn away because she needed to see his lips, but she leaned back, putting up her chin.

'Don't hold back.' His voice had got thick. Rummaging in the pocket of his cardigan, he found a shredded wad of tissue and dabbed his nose. '— uhve — ih then. Tell me!'

It took a while to puzzle out a question. 'Nothing — oh!'

The viciousness of the look that sparked through his eyes made her tummy jump flat to her spine. After how he'd conjured up Nana for her, it was like drinking milk gone rancid. She backed away, as Pom Pom began to whine.

'Ellie!' Mrs Ray's voice, sharp. 'Watch yourself!'

But she'd already stumbled into them. Black tea slopped over the saucer in Mrs Ray's hand, and on to the floor with a smoky pinewood smell.

'Sit yourself down, Vera.' Mrs Ray guided the old lady to a chair. 'It's just a spill, we'll sort it, and get you another cup, don't worry.'

Meaning Ellie to help, Sheila gave her a pointed nod towards the kitchen, but the girl was too busy watching old Miss Pierson.

Pink-cheeked in a cloud of lavender talc, the old lady looked soft as anything, but her voice came out sharper than glass. 'Shouldn't you be in school, Colin?'

With her dentures in, her speech was clear. Still, Ellie thought she must have misheard. Either that, or the old lady had lost the plot. But Mrs Ray said afterwards that Mr Pierson was a teacher up at the Catholic school, the one by the level crossing. 'If you call it teaching,' she added, because it was only art, and in her view that hardly counted.

There was exasperation at the back of her voice. She meant to have words with Ellie, about crashing into them like that, and not helping mop up, let alone that she hadn't stayed put like she'd been told. But Ellie, having caught something similar in old Miss Pierson's tone, was fixed on that.

'Why did she get so snippy when he said he wasn't feeling up to it today?' Ellie trotted at Mrs Ray's heels, back up the alley. 'He can't help it.'

'He's got a weakness.' Mrs Ray squeaked open their gate.

A weakness? Like a weak chest? Or weak in the head? The old lady had been all of a fidget, her pale eyes darting about.

'Vera's had a lot to put up with.' That was all Mrs Ray was saying. She banged the gate shut behind them, leaving Ellie none the wiser.

### *Three years earlier*

Tiptoeing upstairs in his socks, Colin hovered outside his aunt's door, listening to the radio murmur. Judging himself safe, he padded on to his own room and heaved the glass dome up into his arms. It was heavy and unwieldy: he took a mis-step on the landing and bumped the wall.

Straight away, Vera's voice sprang out. 'Col-in!'

'Just shifting some bits about,' he called, knowing it wouldn't satisfy her.

It didn't. 'Col-in!'

Setting the dome down with a grunt, he pushed open her door. 'What is it, Aunty Vera?'

She was tucked under a mound of blankets with Pom Pom splayed like roadkill over the top. 'Are you taking him out now?'

The little dog tucked his head under a marmalade flank, no keener than Colin.

'It's starting to rain. I'll do it in a bit.'

'You won't leave it too late, will you?'

'He'll bark if I do.'

And if Colin wasn't there, or was past noticing, then eventually the little dog would piddle under the wardrobe. Then Mrs Ray had to get the whiff out with baking soda and white vinegar. The way she'd spoken to him after the last time was worse than s hiding. A flaying of the spirit. Just remembering it gave Colin pause.

'Come on then.' He had to scoop the unwilling dog off the bed.

'You won't be long, will you?' Bobbing up over the pile of blankets, Vera's wrinkled face swivelled to find him.

'It might take a while. You know what he's like.'

Vera did, all too well. It wasn't the dog that worried her.

Tugging a stiff-legged Pom Pom behind him, through the drizzle, Colin stopped in the alley to peer over Clara's gate. Her kitchen window was glowing and he found that he couldn't hold back. The door was on the latch; easing it open, he let out a fluting whistle.

He saw he wasn't the only visitor lured by the light. Mottled carpet beetles had crawled out from the understair cupboard to flutter around the ceiling. Pom Pom growled and flung himself up at them, until Colin yanked his lead.

'You're a bit before time.' Clara appeared on the stairs, with a crumpled red house-coat over her slacks and a purple turban on her head.

'I'm not stopping.' He flapped the lead. 'I've got to drag him round the lamp posts. It'll take an age, he hates the rain.'

'Want a quickie first?' The strands of grey fringe poking from the turban were lopsided, she'd had another go with the kitchen scissors.

He shouldn't even have come in, he knew. Dog slobber made her sneeze. But oh, the relief of it. Bow legs straining to support her plump torso, Clara was already reaching under the sink. Colin politely averted his eyes. When he looked back, she'd got the bottle and was standing back up, rubbing one knee.

'Bad today?' he asked.

'So so. This'll see me right.' She lifted the brandy.

A quarter full, so she'd not dipped in since he was last here. Colin didn't have that kind of willpower. He tried to sound jokey. 'Just what the doctor ordered.'

Clara filled a tumbler to the brim and passed it across, careful not to brush fingers. 'That'll keep the chill out.'

It was Colin's first today. He couldn't help rushing it. 'Ahhh.' Then, excusing himself, 'I needed that.'

Clara topped him up without comment. Her sun-spotted face wasn't anything to look at, even if he'd been the sort to care about that. The acceptance radiating from her was what drew him in. It overwhelmed him. Staggered him, and that wasn't a figure of speech: with a few under his belt, he'd more than once come close to tipping down on one knee.

A couple of hours later, brushing off Pom Pom, who kept pawing at his shins, he was back teetering on that brink. 'Clara?'

They'd moved on to the knock-off vodka. Her glass twinkled like a rainbow in the light of the TV. He heaved himself on to the carpet, staring into the sparkle rather than meet her eye. 'Clara?'

'Oops, Colin, you've slid off the couch, you dozy bugger.' She started to laugh.

Pom Pom ran round him, whining and scrabbling at his shoes. His nerve failed. 'Mrghm. Best take the dog out.'

At the back door, the security light snapped on, blinding bright. Pom Pom was bursting, he raised a tawny leg right there against the drainpipe. It was no good trying to tug him away, he'd just spray all over the yard. This was exactly

the sort of awkwardness Colin couldn't stand. With anyone else, he'd have got hot and anxious and ended up being rude. But though Clara was doubled over, laughing hard enough to do herself a mischief, somehow that was all right. Lightness filled him, like the lift from that first brandy. 'Clara?'

Her knee was wobbling, she had to hold on to the latch to drag herself upright. 'Oh Col, it's gone all over your shoes. Your face!'

'I got you something.' He'd meant to bring the present, but he could fetch it now. 'Hold fast and I'll — '

But her attention was gone. She was looking past him, her face all caved in, like Aunt Vera's without her dentures. As the gate squeaked and Pom Pom barked, Colin turned. A teenager, that was all, a girl with a tangle of shocking pink hair over grotty skin.

'Dawn …' Clara's voice was a whisper.

Even then, it took him a moment to twig. But it'd been so long, and he'd only ever seen her in passing: at first a pudgy little brat and later a sullen big one.

'Droopy-drawers Pierson?' The girl's black-ringed eyes flicked over him, then across to her mam. 'You must be bloody desperate.'

Colin knew he shouldn't let that pass. Stand up for yourself, his dad woud have said. Be a man. But he just shrank back as Dawn stepped up to her mam, pink frizz to grey curls.

'Who's dropping their knicks for all sorts now then, Mam?' Up close, the girl's face looked wrung-out, lifeless. Her voice was taunting. 'Aren't you ashamed?'

Whistling through to the kitchen, the wind wobbled the door, making Clara's hand shake. 'You never gave me a chance to take that back. Sneaking off like a thief in the night. I had the police out for you, everything.'

Dawn flicked back a swoop of pink hair. 'You were out cold. In a puddle of your own piss. Did you mop that up before you got the coppers in?'

'Oh —' The fight went out of Clara. 'You've been with him then, all this time? The bloke?'

Dawn's thin arms wrapped round herself. 'You were right about that much. He didn't want to know. Gave me money to get rid.'

Though Clara couldn't be surprised, it still hurt, like bearing down on her bad leg. Colin saw the ripple go through her face, though all she said was, 'Why didn't you come home, then?'

'And have her grow up here?' The girl's pitted cheeks hollowed into a laugh that rang bitter. 'I thought I could do better.'

It took Clara a moment. 'What, so — you had it, then?'

Dawn bit a flaking lip, as if making up her mind, then turned and called, 'Ellie! Ellie!'

Pom Pom, excited by the shout, let out a volley of barks.

'ELLIE!' Dawn tottered back to the gate, her knock-kneed legs looking fit to snap. There'd been more flesh on her before, it didn't look right. They heard her scolding in the alley. 'I told you to stay put … No … come here.'

Mousy roots showing under the light, she propelled a puffy orange bundle back into the yard. 'There. Go see your Nana.'

It was a toddler, in a too-big parka. A patch of white face emerged from the folds of a fur-lined hood as she looked back at her mam.

'Go on.' Dawn gave a little push and the child stumbled forward.

Clara caught an arm before she tripped. The coat might be stained, but it was thick enough that she could barely feel the small bones inside. 'What's she called? Elly, is it?'

The orange hood tipped up. 'Eh-ee, Eh-ee.'

Dawn swung the child up on to a bony hip. 'Sssh. Eat your raisins.'

The toddler stared at Colin, pressed up against the wall. She'd dropped her snackbox, he saw; it was lying by the drain. Dawn bobbed down for it and shoved the box into the child's hand, getting impatient when she didn't take it. 'Here. Here!'

A slug of snot slithered towards the toddler's top lip. She let out a wail, then snatched the box and stuffed its contents into her mouth, chewing noisily with her round, unblinking eyes fixed on Colin.

'I'd better … I'll just … ' He squeezed flat to the wall, trying to get past without brushing against Dawn.

'Eleanor Clara.' Dawn bounced the child across to her other hip and gave her mam a defiant look. 'Don't take it to mean anything. I couldn't think of anything else, that's all.'

Now Colin's way was blocked. 'Mrghm … really should ergh … ' He shot Clara a pleading glance. She knew that he couldn't touch people, it made his skin shrivel.

But Clara was crouching now, bracing her bad knee with one hand, to peer under the orange hood on Dawn's shoulder.

'Look at that hair. Dark as pitch. She didn't get that from our side, did she?' Pulling her sleeve over her hand, she flicked away the snot. 'Ugh. That's better.'

The toddler twitched away, pressing closer to Dawn, and flapped the box of raisins. 'Awww!'

'No more.' Dawn showed her it was empty. 'All gone.'

'Awwww!' The child tried to tug her mam's face round to hers with a fistful of pink hair.

'Ouch! Stop it, Ellie!' The next yank brought tears to Dawn's eyes. She had to kneel down on the wet ground to prise herself free.

'Awwww!' The toddler set off at a furious totter, stamping round the yard.

'AWWWW!'

Pom Pom twisted out of his collar and raced across, barking. He jumped up, sending the child sprawling. Tatty orange coat merged with fox-like fur in a squealing, yelping pile of fright and excitement.

'Call the dog, Colin,' Clara cried, but he was too flustered to do more than stand agape, with the lead dangling uselessly from his hand.

'Oh, get away, you mangy brute,' Clara dived in, pushing off the dog's wet snout. Her eyes were already beginning to itch, she'd pay for this later. 'It's all right, he's only licking you, you're all right. Sssh.'

The little dog ran over to Colin. Bending down, he tried to catch on to its heaving flanks, but Pom Pom easily squirmed away.

'Get a grip of him, what's the matter with you?' Clara exclaimed as Pom Pom darted back over to the toddler.

Ellie squealed, tumbling backwards as the dog tried to lick her face.

'Pick her up, Dawn, go on.' Clara got between them. 'Colin, can't you get hold of that dratted dog?'

'Hey!' Next door's sash window shot up, and Sam Ray's voice boomed out. 'Hey! What's going on over there?'

'Never you mind!' Clara yelled back, but to the others, she said, 'Let's get inside, come on.'

'I can't do it, Mam.' Dawn backed away, her whole body trembling, as the child bellowed, arms flailing. The dog jumped and howled in sympathy.

'Hey!' Mr Ray was shouting again. Then the sash thudded down.

Clara took charge, half-carrying, half-dragging the wailing toddler, not waiting for Dawn.

With a panting Pom Pom clenched under one arm, Colin eyed the still-shaking girl, who was in the way of the gate. Her pupils were pin-pricks and there were dark circles under her eyes. He made an attempt to edge past, but her insect-thin body blocked him.

'What're you looking at? You dirty bugger.'

His breath got stuck in his throat. 'Mrghm … not … urgh.'

'You old pervert.' Thin as twigs, dragging her black top with them, her arms whipped upwards. 'That what you're after?'

He barely registered the little breasts. It was the bruising below that made him gasp. Black and yellow, her ribs stuck out like a bunch of overripe bananas. Stark in the glare of the security light, the ugliness held him trapped, until a sound from above peeled his eyes loose.

Another window was open at the Rays', up on the top floor. Two sniggering boys hung out of it, elbowing each other to make room. Colin didn't keep track of the names, but it must be the older pair, seven or eight years in age. His lungs were fluttering, he couldn't get a word out before they pulled their heads back inside. Somewhere during that time, the gate squeaked. When he looked round, it was hanging open and Dawn was gone.

Three weeks later, she turned up dead on a dosshouse floor in Hawksworth. Sheila Ray told Vera the news, and she passed it on to Colin in a hushed tone. An awful thing. Aunty Vera's swollen fingers kneaded Pom Pom as she told it, making the dog whine and wriggle in her lap.

Colin had been so panicked by it all that he'd stayed clear of the Linnet house altogether. It was pathetic, he knew: scuttling down the alley on workdays

like a frightened beetle, and making Pom Pom do his business in the yard at night. Now he took to walking the little dog out again and finding excuses to linger near Clara's gate, though when at last he bumped into her, it was by accident. Heaving a clinking rubbish sack out at dusk, he came upon her at the end of the alley. Cigarette glowing in one hand, she was using the other to steady Ellie, who was perched on top of the metal bins.

Colin was tongue-tied, but Clara spoke just as if he hadn't hidden himself away for weeks. 'Twenty minutes I've been stood here, would you credit it?'

The child had her back to them. She looked less feral than before, in a green duffel coat and with silver clips in her dark hair. The embossed letters of the street name at the top of the wall seemed to fascinate her; she crooned to herself as she ran her fingers round their edges.

'She won't be rushed.' Clara blew smoke out of her nose. 'Believe me, I've tried.'

The grey fringe had been cropped short, all but a random corkscrewing tuft. Colin said awkwardly, 'You're all right, are you? I mean, considering — '

'You've heard then.' The cigarette-end flared. 'Course you have.'

Colin knew the pinch around her mouth. 'You did your best for her.'

A short laugh. 'Like your dad did for you, eh?'

They'd found unacceptable truths at the bottom of the bottle on one long night. Nothing either of them wanted to dredge up again.

'I'm sorry I got short with you over the dog.' Clara found another cigarette and lit it from the butt of the first. 'I didn't mean to upset you.'

'Oh.' It took a moment for him to get his head around. She thought it was *her* fault he'd kept off. He ought to tell her it wasn't. But then he'd have to say, about Dawn, and he'd rather not. He nodded towards the little girl, who was tapping the sign and making strangled sounds. 'What's up with her?'

'She wants that read out.' The new cigarette end flared. 'Every street, every time. Getting anywhere takes an age. Dawn did it for her, must have. I think she knows the letters, most of them. It's hard to tell.'

Impatiently, the child grabbed Clara's chin, trying to tug it towards her.

'Hold on, Ellie.' Clara took another puff. 'I don't know what goes on in her head. She was screaming for Dawn come sunup every day, it was awful. Then the other morning, nothing. Silence. I thought — well, I ran in, all of a panic, and found her staring up at the light coming through the curtain. The lining'd got tangled up. Next night, I twisted it out of the way, and same thing. No screaming. So I got the scissors and snipped the whole lot out. Proper nice ones they were

too, the material was a wedding present. I made them myself. I used to do that, you know. Sew. Anyway, they're ruined now. It's worth it, not to have the screaming. There's no reasoning with her when she's like that.'

'Well, it's a difficult age, isn't it?' Colin didn't know, not really. He taught in secondary school, he had no idea about toddlers.

'Mhhh! Uhhhh!' The child was grabbing at Clara's head and hands.

'Ellie, come on, stop it.' Clara had to drop the cigarette or the child would have got a burn. Then, to Colin, 'She's nearly three. Dawn was talking well before that, proper sentences. I don't think —'

Bellows of strangulated fury drowned the rest out. There was nothing Colin could do. He backed away and left Clara to it.

The funeral was on Friday. Colin knew because Mrs Ray told Aunt Vera. He walked past the church at a distance and saw them all going in. A few weeks later after tea he told Aunt Vera that he'd be popping out. Her spirits sank but she was busy opening a tin for Pom Pom and only said 'I hope you won't stop out late', which they both knew was code for *don't drink yourself into a stupor*.

'Pass that over.' He whistled a sparrow-song as he took the bowl, keeping his hand clear of his aunt's papery fingers. 'You've spilled half of it.'

Vera knew she had, the little Pomeranian was jumping and whining. She listened to the swish as Colin swept the scattered chunks back into the bowl, and the thump as he set it down.

'Here you go, greedy guts.'

Vera didn't like her little dog being called names. 'It's a pleasure to hear him enjoy his food.'

Unlike Colin, who picked and fussed at anything that wasn't sausage or chops. He didn't need her to spell it out.

But it gave him a tremendous shock when she added, 'What's that you're taking out with you, then?'

Her pale eyes weren't quite on the glass dome, but they were close enough. It was waiting by the back step, wrapped in brown paper. Colin had gone to the trouble of smuggling it down while she was in the bathroom, just to avoid nosy questions. He wasn't a child, why should he always have to explain himself? Sometimes he suspected his aunt of mindreading powers, either that or she wasn't as blind as she let him think.

'You're imagining things,' he said.

Bottles. Vera was sure of it. They'd been creeping into the house ever since he stopped going round to Clara Linnet's. A roll of the brown paper that he used to muffle the clinking had gone from the kitchen drawer. Pom Pom's snuffly munching was off-kilter, so his bowl wasn't on the step. Which meant something else must be. It wsn't hard to put together.

His footsteps were heading for the door. She called to stop him. 'Sheila says Clara Linnet was in church Sunday,'

The footsteps paused. 'Mrghm.'

'She'll have a lot on her conscience. Poor troubled soul.' *Stay away*, she meant.

Why should he? That furrow in Vera's forehead irked him, it shouted out that he was an endless worry. A failure and a disappointment. He wanted to shout back that if he was, that's what she'd made him just by always wanting him different. But he only grunted and shuffled out.

At Clara's, he gave his usual whistle. A linnet call, it was his little joke. Clara couldn't tell a hawk from a house martin but he liked the idea of educating her. Clasping his awkward parcel in front of him, he nearly tripped over the thick ankles bulging out of the understair cupboard. She was on her hands and knees with a yellow duster knotted round her head.

'What are you about?' he said, though he could see well enough. She was rooting up the carpet.

'There's no other way to get rid of these blasted beetles.' She twisted round. 'What've you got there?'

'It's for you, isn't it?' He set it down, a bit shy, now it'd come to it. 'I told you I'd got you something.'

'Did you?' Clara couldn't even think when she'd last had a present. She'd no idea what to expect. Nor, once she'd stripped off the brown paper, what to say. 'Well — it's big, I'll give you that.'

'I found it at an auction. No one wants this stuff now.' He wasn't going to let on how much he'd paid. It was the quality of the case that pushed up the price, but that wasn't what'd driven his bid. 'They're linnets, see? That's why I got it for you. They're all linnets.'

He looked earnestly at her, loose lips hanging open, waiting for her to grasp the beauty of it. Her name, and his special interest. It was the most personal gift he could imagine.

The silence dragged on. He began to be anxious. This moment had been in his mind for months now, loading with nerves and expectation. He'd even determined to hold fast and not flinch if she got overcome and tried to squeeze his hand or the like, though he was as certain as he could be that she wouldn't.

In the end he had to prompt her. 'Clara?'

'You're bonkers, Col. Stick it in the kitchen and give me a hand, will you?' She bent down and ripped up another corner.

That was it. Obediently, Colin picked it up, steadying himself by gripping his fingers into the fretwork over the cold glass. He put it down on the counter in the kitcen, hollow to the stomach with disappointment, and went back.

'Here.' She pushed a Stanley knife towards him. 'You do the lounge.'

'What? The whole thing?' He hesitated. 'A drink'd help.'

'There's nothing. Not any more.' Her eyes turned towards the stairs, meaning because of the child.

'You can't keep this up, you know,' he said, being gentle.

'Oh?' Clara leaned forwards, gripping the two corners. 'Why's that, then?'

'Well.' Did it need saying? 'You're not cut out for it, are you? Mothering.'

With a loud, grating rip, a whole stretch of carpet tore loose, then slapped back down. Clara rocked back on to her heels. 'I'll send her off to Barnardo's then, shall I? Ruin her, too.'

After Colin's dad died, he'd spent five months in one of their homes, before Aunty Vera came back from the Chinese mission to take charge of him. It had marked him for life.

But, *ruined*? Was that how she thought of him? 'I'm just saying, you don't have to take it on.'

'Take *her* on,' Clara said. The way she was looking at him, with a wrinkle between her eyes, jolted him,

He'd meant the responsibility, he wasn't calling the child 'it', but with her looking like that, as if she was against him, he lost his way and couldn't get it out. Picking up the knife, he went through to the lounge and got to work. The carpet was heavy and smelled stale. It took a good couple of hours to slice into pieces and prise away. Panting, Colin hauled sections out into the yard and bagged them up.

As he tied up the last one, Clara came out and stood beside him. 'I know what you're saying. But what else is there?'

Did she? 'It's no fun, you know, being brought up by someone that doesn't like you.'

She lit a cigarette and smoked it in silence, looking up at the dark sky.

After a while, Colin said, 'It's not eleven yet.'

Clara didn't take up the hint. He waited as long as he could manage, then, just as he was about to suggest he could run up to the offy, she blew out a noseful of smoke. 'You never came to Dawn's funeral.'

That startled him. 'Did you want me to?'

'Wouldn't have mattered if I did, would it?' She threw the cigarette-end down and went back inside.

Tipping soda crystals into a steaming pail of water, she opened the plastic wrapping on a new brush and set to work, scrubbing out the floorboards, making sure there wasn't a crevice left untouched where a stray beetle egg could lurk. It took a good while, and she thought Colin must have gone home, but he then he came in, sweating like a porker and said he'd lugged all the bags down to the bins.

'They won't take that.' Clara didn't stop scrubbing.

'Bung them a few quid and they will.'

She kept going with the brush, scrish scrash scrish scrash scrish scrash, waiting for him to offer to do it for her, and knowing he wouldn't.

'What's that?' he said abruptly. For a second, she thought he'd heard her thoughts, but it wasn't that. 'That noise. In the kitchen.'

Clara hadn't heard anything. She saw he was waiting for her to get up and investigate. 'You're on your feet, aren't you?'

The furrow was back between her brows. It set Colin on edge. He'd only thought it might be the child. And when he got there, it was.

A ghostly figure in white pyjamas, she was clambering on to the counter, using a casserole dish for a step — that's what he'd heard, the clink of it being dragged out of the cupboard. She stood up to look down on the dome, fogging up the glass with her breath.

'Careful!' Colin said, but the toddler took no notice. He shouted it again, louder and she spun round with a start, dark hair flying. One arm smacked the glass dome and sent it skittering towards the edge.

Colin leapt forward, just in time to push it back to safety. But then it was the child that toppled, in a flurry of pale arms and dark hair. He could have caught her, should, by any standard, have tried. But instinct snatched his arms back. He couldn't help it, couldn't do anything but watch her fall. With a crack, her head smashed against the cast iron dish.

In another moment — or perhaps the same one, he couldn't tell — Colin was shunted aside. The unexpectedness of it, the affront, the fear, it was like having his insides plucked out, and he screamed.

Clara was on the floor, her bad leg out at an angle, with the little girl gathered on to her lap. Hair like treacle, spilling over oat-white skin, and for a moment it was all silence, before the relief of a long, shrieking wail.

'Take that glass horror, and go,' she said.

'I couldn't help it.'

'You can't help being a selfish bugger. Go on, take your dead birds and clear out.

*April*

'You've got to speak up when you've not heard, Ellie.' Mrs Ray's knife forced through the bread with a thud. 'Ask. Don't just pretend.'

Brown eyes fixed on Mrs Ray's face. No argument, but no sign of taking it on board either. As if Sheila had missed the point. How did you deal with that? Mrs Ray dug into the margarine with a force that made the knife bend.

'Oh, leave the lass be.' Sam loaded beans on to his fork and topped it with bacon. He chewed it all down without hurry, then took a swig of tea. 'Give her my best for a good first day.'

Mrs Ray wasn't going to do that. The pair of them were sitting next to each other. It was ridiculous. Tight-lipped, she cleared the empty cereal bowls and gave Jake, who'd pushed his aside to scribble his way through his homework, a nudge to get on with it.

'… and the time's twenty past eight …' chattered the radio.

'Oh, for goodness sake.' Mrs Ray sped up, her knife flashing in and out of the jar of paste. 'Ellie, go and finish getting dressed. Quickly. And tell Isaac to come down. Where's Malachi gone? MalACHIII'

Ellie went, but appeared a minute or two later clutching her square body aid. 'Where do I put it? There's no pocket.' She thumped the flat blue front of her school jumper.

Mrs Ray divided triangles of sandwich between five tubs. In all the drudge of name-taping, she'd not even given this a thought. 'Can you not clip it on at the neck?'

But the thin material sagged under the weight, tipping the box forward. 'It'll fall off.'

'Wait!' Elbowing past Malachi, who was demanding help to look for his tie, Sheila ran upstairs for the harness. It had been in a drawer when they cleared Clara's house. Spotless white elastic, still in its packet. And there was the tie as well, dangling over the banister. She brought both down at a jogtrot.

'Stand still, Ellie.' Mrs Ray hooked a broad white strap over each thin shoulder, then clipped the beige box into the flap at the front. 'There!'

The band round Ellie's chest was tight. She tugged at it. 'I can't breathe.'

'— wearing —' Jake's hands lifted from his sheet of fractions and gave a knowing jiggle.

Laboriously threading his tie through the loop round his neck, Malachi snorted into his collar.

Ellie scrabbled at the elastic, not sure of exactly what'd been said, but with her face redder than a post-box. 'Get it off! I don't want it!'

'…eight thirty and… '

There wasn't time for this. Directing a fierce scowl at the boys, Mrs Ray tried to soothe Ellie. 'They're just being silly, and what would they know about all that, anyway?'

'Malachi'd like to — ay-eemh-ee —' Jake's mutter blended into the noise of the radio. Malachi flicked his cheek, and then Mr Ray heaved up from his chair to swat them both. That was enough. Ellie tore the elastic off in such a hurry that Mrs Ray only just caught the aid before it bounced to the floor.

A rumbling from Mr Ray's beard, and then Mrs Ray exclaimed 'All right! I'll sort something!' with so much exasperation that Ellie didn't butt in; just waited, eyes flicking between them, to see what it meant.

Sheila rummaged through her bag of mending. It was all very well to say she was handy with a needle, but she wasn't. The best she could manage for now was a bodge-job with a patch hastily snipped from an old rag of a jumper that had been through all three boys.

'Jake, go and brush your teeth. And tell Isaac if he doesn't get down here this instant, I'll —' Lacking any immediate ideas, Mrs Ray broke off to snap the thread with her teeth.

'… a quarter to nine…'

Mr Ray strapped his coat on, winked at Ellie, and grumbled something towards the boys. Then he kissed his wife, picked up a tub of sandwiches, and headed out of the door. A puff of relief escaped Ellie. He was so gruff and abrupt, and you never knew what he was about. It was like when dogs startled her with their barking. Ellie was nervous of dogs, and Nana had always said it was No Wonder and kept her out of their way.

'Ellie!' Mrs Ray was shaking out the jumper. 'This'll have to do for now.'

Sheila was berating herself for not being prepared. This hadn't come up before, because every one of Ellie's blouses had a coordinating pocket stitched to the front. Embroidered, too, with flowers and animals and the like, in contrasting thread. Who'd have believed that Clara Linnet had the patience?

The imagined reproach made her stern. 'There's no time for argument, Ellie, just put it on, come on.'

But the expected rebellion didn't come. Ellie seemed perfectly happy. Dragging the jumper over her head, which mussed her neatly-combed hair, she clipped the aid in to the patch-pocket.

'Mam,' Isaac was slumped in the kitchen doorway. 'My belly hurts.'

'Not now, Isaac.' Sheila tried for another comb of Ellie's hair, but her first attempt tugged one of the wires running up to the ear-pieces, and the girl twisted away.

'…ten to nine…'

'Maaaaam.' Isaac overdid the moan.

'Get going, the lot of you.' Mrs Ray was thinking she oughtn't to have given in over walking Ellie in on her first day, even though it was only yards away. But the child had made such a fuss at the idea of being singled out, that it'd be asking for trouble to go back on it now. While Ellie was buckling her shoes, Sheila said forcefully over her head to the boys, 'Make sure she gets there in one piece — Isaac! —'

He was leaning against the back door, still holding his stomach, but that made him look up hopefully.

'You're to look out for Ellie today, all right?'

She pinned him with her gaze until she got an unwilling nod.

'Off you go, then, all of you. Malachi, hold on!' Though he wasn't twelve till the summer, he was already a head taller than Sheila. She felt like a child herself as she thrust his forgotten sandwiches up at him.

Switching on the iron, she went upstairs to fetch the basket of clothes, balancing it on one hip as she paused at her bedroom window to watch the higgledy piggledy group round the corner. The long strides of the two older boys sprang them on ahead. Ellie, trotting after them, couldn't keep up, and tripped on the kerb. She bobbed up, rubbing a grazed knee, and waited for Isaac, who was lagging well behind, scuffing his shoes in the dirt. From up here, the sight of him put Sheila uncomfortably in mind of young Dawn Linnet. She and Sam had watched her trailing off to school, years back, before the skirt had been hoiked up and the make-up plastered on, always with that same bedraggled, down-in-the-dumps look. The Rays had judged Clara for it, if she'd cared more she'd have done something about it. Well, Sheila did care. She shouldn't have told him to take care of Ellie today, he was only six and it wasn't his job. Having Ellie here just sucked up so much energy, there wasn't enough left to go round.

Downstairs, the iron was hot. Sheila took Ellie's best blouse out of the top of the basket. The lilac pocket was decorated with a fluttering butterfly in sky

blue silk. Beautiful work, it didn't show properly when Ellie wore it, with that fat plastic box squatting inside.

'…two minutes to nine…' said the radio.

Crooking her finger like the clip of the aid, Sheila skewered the butterfly. Then she ironed it flat, to and fro, with each hiss of steam enveloping her in a clean-smelling cloud of starch. An idea was wrinkled somewhere in the folds of her brain, and she meant to smooth it out.

At the gates, Malachi peeled off. The high school was only next door, but it had its own entrance. He clapped Ellie on the shoulder, saying something. What? No point in asking, his head was so much higher and he was already moving off. Just sounds, but with an even rhythm to them, and his ruddy face cheerful. A general pleasantness wrapped around Ellie, bringing out a smile as she turned back round.

Neither Jake nor Isaac was in sight, but an older girl, Jake's age, ten or eleven, with a squirrel-tail of reddish hair, was watching her. Met with blankness, Ellie's smile wobbled and then dropped. The girl swung round to the rest of her group and said something that caused a ripple. All the girls turned to stare at Ellie's chest.

Folding her arms high, in the shape of the rejected harness, Ellie lost herself in the jostle of bright blue bodies. Shouts and squeals clashed in the air. Then the shrill of a bell and a scramble of noise. Yelling and bumping, everyone rushed to line up. From nowhere, Isaac's white hair shot up, his face mouthing at her over a blue knot of shoulders.

What? Ellie hunched into an exaggerated shrug, too intent on his face to catch his jabbing finger. You what? But his eyes rolled sideways in a flash of alarm that she didn't understand and he dropped back down into the swarm.

Wheeling against the crush, Ellie came up hard against a shapeless grey thickness. A body. Others separated around it, streaming past. The woman, it must be a woman with that tight-strained bundle of hair, in spite of the wide, mannish chin, might've said something. Ellie guessed she had by the stare in her scrunched raisin-small eyes.

'— ullyaw ock uh —' Sounds sprayed out like she was spitting, but no sense to them.

'What?' Ellie's eyes darted round the emptying playground for a clue.

'Pardon.'

Ellie stared.

'Pardon, not what, please.' Short sharp shocks of words. 'Pull your socks up!'

Ellie flinched. Mr Ray was always barking that at the boys, meaning jump to it! Isaac had translated for her. No shilly-shallying was his other one. Not at her, Mr Ray never issued orders to her, but just the force of him put a rocket up you.

'I'm new, I don't know,' she said in a rush, ready to run off to wherever she was directed.

'— oo een to go on.' A grey hand flapped downwards. 'Your sock.'

Ellie looked down. The left one had drifted down to her ankle — oh! Sock, not socks. Pull your sock up, that was quite different. Slowly, catching her breath, she tugged it up to her knee and folded it over.

'Much better.' A tight grey smile. '— Eleanor Linnet.'

Her name jumped out at her, but it didn't rise like a question, so Ellie waited for more. There was an odd bandana gripping the grey woman's head, as thick and fibrous as the coiled bun behind it. Patiently and with off-putting loudness, the woman said 'You. Are. Eleanor. Linnet.'

Still not a question, but an answer seemed to be expected so Ellie nodded, keeping a wary eye on.the woven band. It looked like it was made out of the woman's actual hair. Cut off, or maybe even still growing. Ugh. Her shudder got in the way of what was being said. A name. Miss something, it had an 'uh' sound, but that was as much as could be got. Thrusting a slipping ear-piece back in, Ellie obeyed as the woman waved her up the steps of a prefab box that'd been stuck on to the end of the main building.

'— here,' Inside, the grey woman patted a bench.

Ellie supposed she was to sit there, so did. It was the frontmost desk, they were all doubles with shared seats. The grey woman went out of the door and moments later, a herd of blue jumpers funnelled up the steps and spread around the room. Where they'd been since leaving the playground, Ellie didn't know. She didn't even wonder; other people were always abruptly vanishing or reappearing, it was all part of the general mysteriousness of things.

Head down, she stared at her desk. It was deeply grooved, with a stained ink-pot holder and a broken hinge. Then, becoming aware of stifled giggles, she looked up and found two pigtailed faces leaning into her.

'Zardsk' said one.

The other reached out and tapped the aid clipped to Ellie's front. 'What's that then?'

Ellie jerked as if the hand had gone under her shirt. Her aid was part of her body and just as personal. The movement knocked her ear-piece out of place with a sharp whistle.

The pigtailed girls giggled as if she'd burped. Or worse.

'Get lost.' Ellie faced them down.

'Get lotht.' One mimicked her.

No one had ever told Ellie that she had a lisp. But there'd been a few times in the last weeks when Jake had repeated something she'd said, and either Malachi had snurked or Mrs Ray had told him to give over. Now it clicked.

'Just sod off,' she muttered, with a thickened tongue.

'Djutht!' 'Djutht thod off!' They were killing themselves laughing.

At the back of the classroom, Isaac winced and fidgeted. He'd said he'd look out for Ellie, but what could he do? Getting noticed was his personal nightmare. Unlike his brothers, he always did his best to slip under the radar. Ashamed even as he did it, he ducked his head so he didn't have to watch, but he couldn't block his ears.

Ellie could. She lifted her broken desk lid, sheltering behind it. There were names carved into the underside. She traced the deepest with her finger, concentrating on the feel of the rough, splintered wood, and the high-pitched voices melted away.

With relief, Isaac caught the trip-trap of stern footsteps. Others did too, but not Ellie. Blinking, she was the last to catch on; finally noticing that chairs were scraping back. Everyone was on their feet. Dropping her desk lid with a slam, she jumped up too.

'Good morning, class.'

It was the grey Pardon woman with the 'uh' name.

'Good morning, Miss Tuh —' (or Cuh, or Vuh?) everyone chanted back, their voices overlapping and breathy.

'This is Eleanor Linnet.' A grey hand dropped on to Ellie's shoulder, turning her towards the blank wall of faces. 'Let's give her a proper Stonethorpe welcome, shall we?'

'Wel-come to-Stone Thorpe-El uh-nuh,' came the singsong chorus.

Ellie flushed hot under the stares that took in the wires running down from her ears and the box clipped to her front. Getting buffeted in the playground was one thing, then she'd felt invisible, but this was worse. Now she was just an add-on to the curious thing on her chest.

'We told her, Miss.' A self-important wail from one of the pigtailed girls beside her. The other one chipped in. 'It's our desk, Miss, and she's not getting out.'

The teacher made short work of them. She sent one pair of pigtails to the back of the class, and told the other to sit down next to Ellie. Then, with her grey lips giving emphasis to every sound, she asked if Ellie could Hear Clearly from There?

'Er, yes.' Ellie's voice showed she thought it a daft question. It wasn't any easier for her to grasp that other people didn't know what she could hear than it was for them to accept that she didn't know what she couldn't.

There were giggles, and a few gasps. At the back, Isaac held his breath, but the teacher rose above it.

'Manners, please, Eleanor. Yes — '

Ellie, who'd been swiveling in her seat to piece together what was wrong, spun back.

'Yes, Miss Cuh — uh' the grey lips prompted.

Ellie tried to fill the gaps.

'Yes, Miss Cuddle' — no, an unnatural stillness hinted that it was wrong.

She tried again, 'er, Miss Cuntell?'

A gale of laughter turned the room cold.

'Quiet!' The teacher held up a palm. 'How dare you mock an affliction?

You will all lose ten minutes of afternoon play.'

What was an uhflictn? Nothing good, that was for sure. The mood in the room had turned sour. Ellie felt the sucked-in breaths around her. Now she hated the Pardon woman even worse than all these starers and sniggerers.

'Miss Cun-dall, Eleanor.' The grey lips shaped it firmly. 'CuN-DaLL. If you

don't hear something, then Put Up Your Hand and Ask. Do You Understand?'

Like Mrs Ray. Ask, Ellie. Just Say, Ellie. Don't Pretend, Ellie. She stared

at the grey teeth behind Miss CuN-DaLL's stretched grey smile. Ugly Ugly Ugly.

The ugliness of strangers. It hadn't been like this at home with Nana. There, it

was just the two of them, they understood each other or they didn't. Now, with

the titters rising behind her, Ellie felt it was just her, an alien on the wrong planet, fighting against hordes.

'Yes, Miss CuN-DaLL.' She stared straight ahead, blocking everyone out.

A boy got up from the back and came down the aisle, passing out reading books. He had to tap Ellie's shoulder to get her to take hers. Isaac, taut

as an arched rod, couldn't believe it. Was she trying to show herself up? He saw

her start and tap her right ear-piece, then look down at the girl next to her to check what to do.

Pigtails still bore a grudge. Catching on to what Ellie was about, she wrapped her arm around her book.

Don't! Isaac flinched as Ellie craned closer in obvious frustration. Any

moment, she'd grab the other girl's elbow and yank it away.

'Page Twelve, Eleanor.' Miss Cundall appeared between them. Ellie

scooted back to her own half of the bench with bad grace.

At Miss Cundall's nod, a girl in the row behind stood and began to read. It was about a dog on a journey. After three minutes, she sat down and the boy next to her took up the story. Ellie didn't catch much to begin with, but as the readers got closer, she began to be interested. Some of the children read easily, others stuttered and halted their way through. It was too frustrating to try to listen, so she flicked through her book instead. The first page had a picture of a dog falling out of a removal van. In the next, he was trotting purposefully along the road. Soon she was deep into the story.

At the back, Isaac was safe; he'd counted up and the bell for break was bound to go before his turn. Last week he'd gone through the torture. It was bad enough being thick without having it put on display. Often he messed about to get out of reading, sometimes he skived off altogether. He felt bad for Ellie, it'd be her go any minute. On her first day, too. Was Miss Cundall really going to be that mean?

Yes, she was. The old bat never skipped anyone.

'Eleanor?'

Snickers broke out because Miss Cundall had to tap the desk with the board rubber.

'Eleanor. Would You Like to Read Now?'

'No,' said Ellie, too thrown to spot that it wasn't a real question, then, mistaking the reason for the teacher's frown, 'Errr… no, Miss Cundall?'

Only another rap of the board rubber kept the snorts of laughter under control.

'Read for us, please.' A dusting of chalk settled on Miss Cundall's grey finger as she turned to the right page.

Ellie wasn't going to be able to manage it, Isaac was sure, and as the pause lengthened, his anger grew. Miss Cundall had shown him up just like this, over and over. He'd once considered sticking a pencil down each nostril and slamming his head on the desk, just to get out of his turn. Fortunately the bell

had gone before it'd come to that. If only the chuffing thing would ring now, it must almost be time.

'Eleanor.' Miss Cundall pointed at the line. 'Please begin.'

But a loud gasp interrupted her. Heads turned to see the cause.

'Isaac Ray! I might have known.' The teacher strode to the back of the room. 'You naughty, careless boy!'

A dark splatter was pooling under his desk, dripping down from an upturned glass bottle.

'Haven't I said all ink is to be kept inside the desk?'

'He did it on purpose, Miss,' said the pigtailed girl who'd been sent to the back.

Shut up, Isaac willed her, but it didn't work.

'He did, I saw him, Miss, he — '

'That's enough!' Miss Cundall was steaming, he could all but see fire in her flaring nostrils. 'Take this rag, Isaac, and wipe up the worst of it while I get the mop. You can stay in during break and scrub it properly.'

The bell shrilled. There. Isaac had dared and won. Kneeling on the damp floor, he let go a long breath that he hadn't even known he was holding. Footsteps thudded past him as everyone rushed to the door. Then Ellie's voice launched across the room.

'After a few hours the dog got tired'. Gabbling because her eyes were rushing ahead of her mouth, she rushed on without a breath. 'He wasn't bounding down the road any more his paws were blistered and he was hungry and thirsty crawling on to the grass to the side he lay down andputhisheadonhispaws…'

The rag dropped from Isaac's hand, soaking into a splash of ink.

'Wait a moment, Eleanor.' Miss Cundall fetched another book. Not from the school shelf this time, but out of her large pigeon-grey handbag. A proper, grown-up book.

Ellie read more slowly. 'There was no pos-sib-il-ity of taking a walk that day. We had been won-wandering, indeed, in the leafless shub … sh … shubbery …'

Giggles sprouted from the doorway, where some of the girls had gathered to peer back in. Under his desk, Isaac put his hands over his ears and stared at the dark patch soaking through the limp cloth.

'Sh-rubb-er-y'. Ellie stopped for a breath, and the sniggering sank in. Was it the way she made the 'sh' sounds? Or because she'd fumbled the word? Maybe it wasn't her at all, but something else — Isaac there, playing the fool under his desk? Was there even a reason? Maybe they were just catching it from each other, or all laughing at different things. She felt the gap between them and her widen, because how did you ever know?

'Silence.' Miss Cundall had no such doubts. Raising her voice so that it carried into the corridor, she called, 'Eleanor puts you all to shame!'

Scattering, the girls let the words echo past them. Only Isaac, hunched on the floor, was left to take them to heart. Miss Cundall asked Ellie if she had truly not been to school before, and then wanted to know who had taught her to read.

'Nana, I suppose.' Ellie said doubtfully, because she couldn't remember a time when words on a page hadn't made sense. How could anyone not read? Print was a jump straight into meaning, a different thing entirely to the muddle they all made with talk.

'Well, she did an excellent job.' Eyes falling on Isaac, Miss Cundall added: 'And with such a good example at home, Isaac Ray, I hope you'll be inspired to work harder.'

Bunching up the rag in his fingers, Isaac looked at the smeared floor. Might as well ask him to read out those blotches, for all the good it'd do. He'd got ink on his jumper, too, bugger. Now Mam'd give him a hard time.

'Oh, get up, Isaac, do.' His sullen expression got under Miss Cundall's grey skin. 'You're making a worse mess. Wait there while I get the mop.'

As she click-clacked away, Isaac looked at Ellie. Wanting something from her — not thanks exactly, because she hadn't even needed his help, but at least a nod towards the trouble he'd braved — he stuck out his stained sleeve.

'See that? Mam'll have a right go.'

Spills and mess happened around Ellie all the time. Nana had never fussed over it. Once, Ellie'd let a whole pot of red poster paint slip on the stairs. Not a word said, and the next morning every trace was gone. At the Rays, though, there were tellings off all the time. Careful, Ellie. Don't, Ellie. Watch yourself, Ellie. Oh, *Ellie.* Half the time she'd not done a thing, they all just acted like she had. Was Isaac trying it on now?

'Well that's your own stupid fault, in't it?' she said, deciding he was. 'Don't go blaming it on me.'

Isaac was stung. 'You're bloody ungrateful, you know that?'

'You what?' His eyes were murky like pond water, Ellie couldn't see to the bottom. 'You're bonkers.'

Picking up on Miss Cundall's stiff-soled footfall, Isaac muttered something. Ellie only got the cut of anger from his tone. Blinking back tears, she marched out, too caught up in herself to notice Miss Cundall coming the other way with a brimming bucket. How badly she wanted to be back with Nana, where there hadn't been so much to work out.

With water slopping into her shoes, Miss Cundall exclaimed after her. 'Eleanor!'

But Ellie didn't turn round. Outside, she wasn't sure where to put herself. The boys had taken over the playground with piles of blue jumpers for goals, and the girls were tucked into small pockets around the edges, playing cats' cradle or taking turns to jump over a long loop of elastic.

'— eedips, then?' The pigtailed girls appeared beside her.

Ellie spun round. 'What?'

One of them tittered.

'Can you read lips?' The other one pointed at the first, 'She says all deafos can.'

A bit more giggling, and a few glances between them. Might be a wind-up, or might not, Ellie wasn't sure. Nana had been right, school was no good, better stay at home.

'I'm not a deafo,' she told them. 'Don't say that.'

'Why not?' Both pigtailed faces seemed honestly surprised. 'You've got a deaf-aid, haven't you?'

'It's a hearing aid,' Ellie's hand cupped the pocket on her chest protectively. 'It helps you *hear*. Don't you know anything?'

That rubbed them up the wrong way. Their faces went hard, and one said, 'Well, excuuuuuse me.'

From the classroom window, where he was hovering, Isaac saw Ellie's chin jut out. He didn't need to be able to hear what was going on to tell that she was handling it all wrong. Was she going to throw one of her temper fits? She'd never live that down.

He wasn't far wrong. Ellie's temper was rising. That vacant look on the pigtail girls' faces was everything that was wrong with talking. It was impossible to get through. People were such blockheads. The frustration of it all lit a ready-laid fuse.

But before it exploded, there was an interruption. One of the pigtail girls nudged the other. Ellie turned too. An older girl was sashaying across the playground. High, reddish ponytail swinging, skirt hitched up to her bum in a way that would have made Mrs Ray suck her teeth, she didn't even glance at the boys playing football, just expected them to stop for her, and they did. Ellie recognised her straight away, it was that one who'd stared at her at the gate. There was her pack of friends too, sticking together in a giggly huddle and watching her progress.

'Who's that?' Ellie asked, though what she really meant was, why is everyone so impressed with her?

'Aileen Read.' One of the pigtails darted Ellie a spiteful look, throwing her own words back at her. 'Don't you know *anything?*'

Ellie was sidetracked from a retort by the sight of Malachi. He was lounging on the other side of the wire fence that divided the Primary and the High, with his hands in pockets, watching Aileen approach. Tall and broad for his twelve years, his butterscotch blond hair blown back by the wind, he didn't look like the lummox cluttering up the Ray's house now.

Flipping the long, wavy squirrel-tail of hair, the girl had him magnetised. Or he did her. Like sleepwalkers, they both seemed not to know there was anything else around them. Each drew closer to the wire, until his yellow head was pressing against it, merging into her reddish one. Ugh, they were snogging. But still, Ellie was transfixed.

With sudden violence, a football smashed into the fence, inches from their heads, bouncing them apart. Across the playground, Ellie flinched too, just as startled. Aileen Read looked mad enough to spit feathers, she stalked off, shoving aside a boy with spiked golden hair who loped past her to recover the ball. Jake, of course. Even from the back, that jaunty, cocky stride was unmistakable. He'd been the one that'd kicked it in the first place, Ellie saw now, as Malachi jabbed a V-sign through the fence. Grinning, Jake lifted his middle finger in return, then flicked the ball neatly up and tucked it under his arm. Whistles and cheers broke out from some of the boys on the Primary side.

'— uh?' Aileen Read had stopped beside Ellie.

'What?' Ellie said, startled.

The older girl scowled. 'Just watch yourself,' she said with a toss of her red pony-tail, and stalked off.

One of the pigtail girls muttered something snide. Maybe about Aileen, but maybe not. Going by the tone and the titter from the other, Ellie began to be wound up again, but then a tap on the shoulder spun her round.

'— iht?' Jake grinned down at her.

The pigtailed girls got all silly, elbowing each other and smirking. Jake might not be the hero-giant of the Primary that Malachi had been, but his skill at football and his twisting smile got him enough popularity of his own.

'All right?' he said again.

He was talking to Ellie, not the pigtails, but one of them lost her head and gave a snuffling, giggly snort, then went cherry-red.

'I saw your name in my desk,' Ellie said. It'd been hacked an inch deep inside the lid. 'Must've taken you ages.'

'Old Ironhair always sat me up front.' His bright eyes flickered over the other girls, drawing them in. 'She said I couldn't be trusted down back, but I reckon she just fancied me.'

Both the other girls tittered and covered their mouths. Jake bounced the football and caught it on his ankle, holding it balancing there. 'I heard what you called her. Cunty. Brilliant. Wish I'd seen her face.'

Then, bouncing the football once, he booted it back into the game and ran after it, leaving an entirely different mood behind him. Still pressed against the window, Isaac could see it. Instead of huddling together against Ellie, the pigtailed girls separated, flanking her, making her part of the group. Jake'd sorted it out, easy as that, without even trying.

'Have you finished?' Miss Cundall raised her head.

'Done my best, Miss.'

She looked down at the patchy shadow that still blotted the floor.

Well, as usual, Isaac Ray, your best isn't good enough. She didn't actually say that, but he could hear her thinking it.

Isaac was the third Ray to pass through Miss Cundall's bony hands, and it looked very much as if he would leave them even less improved than either of his brothers. Malachi was one of those boys for whom school was a waste: none too bright, and not a spark of interest. Jake might be sharp enough, but was always up to mischief. This one — well, Miss Cundall had started the year with low expectations, and was dropping them daily.

'What time do you have your tea?' she said suddenly.

'Five-ish, Miss,' Isaac rubbed an inky hand through his white hair, too nervous to ask why.

'Very well. Tell your mother to expect me at half past.'

'Miss! Don't, please. I'll be in enough trouble as it is!' But she was already tip-tapping away.

'Oh, Isaac.' His mam, busy dishing up, wasn't best pleased. 'What've you done now?'

Ellie was making a grab for an extra sausage, which got her a rap on the knuckles. 'Ow!'

That distracted his mam, at least. And his dad was too busy forking food into his face to pay attention. Isaac had chosen his moment well.

'How'd you get on, little Missy?' Mr Ray said between mouthfuls.

Ellie gave him an uncertain look, then turned towards Sheila, who sighed. 'Did the boys look after you all right, Ellie?'

'Jake did,' Ellie mumbled with her mouth full.

'Good lad,' Mr Ray said, and Mrs Ray gave Jake the last sausage.

Isaac felt hard done by. He shot Ellie a sullen look that knocked her smile sideways. It didn't give him the satisfaction it should've, which aggrieved him all the more.

Mr Ray got up, wiping his mouth. 'Those seedlings need covered. Looks like frost tonight. You two can lend a hand.' He nodded at the older boys.

'But —' Jake'd rather do anything than trog down to the allotment. He scratched his golden spikes for an excuse. '— I've got homework.'

'Girly swot,' taunted Malachi.

'Better than being a thicko,' Jake ducked a sturdy fist.

'Do it after.' Mr Ray didn't raise his voice. A man his size didn't need to. 'What about you two young'uns?' He dropped a large hand on to the back of Ellie's chair.

Twisting round, she gazed up at his bushy black beard. 'What?'

Mr Ray kept it simple. 'Coming?'

Ellie head 'Come in?' and glanced across at the door, confused. Even if she'd got the word right, it wouldn't have helped, because she didn't know where. Anxious, she darted a look at Isaac for a lead, but he was still in a sulk and ignored her.

'Leave them, Sam,' Mrs Ray was already elbow-deep in the washing up. 'Their teacher's coming. Don't you want to hear what she's got to say?'

'No, you're all right, love.' Mr Ray herded Jake and Malachi out. 'You can catch me up after.'

So that left Sheila to it. Thank heavens she'd given the downstairs a good going over this morning, because she barely had time to clear the pots before Miss Cundall was knocking. At the front, of course. The frame had warped over the winter so it took a bit of tugging. When at last it flew open, Miss Cundall was standing there with a pile of books under one arm, looking put out.

'Good evening, Mrs Ray.' Her eagle glare swooped around the room, landing on Isaac. 'I hope you told your mother to expect me?'

Isaac mumbled something and bolted upstairs. Then, worried about what she meant to say, he crept back down and hid in the kitchen.

Miss Cundall was telling his mam that the books were for Ellie. Isaac peered through to see her set them down, a set of stiff green paperbacks, off-puttingly new and shiny. If he'd been saddled with them, he'd not have thanked her for it.

Ellie didn't either, not until Mrs Ray reminded her, but the way she snatched the books up and tucked herself into a corner of the settee to rummage through them, you'd have thought they were a bag of sweets. It didn't make any sense.

'Careful! They look brand new!' Mrs Ray said.

But Ellie's untidy brown head just dipped lower, one pale hand already thumbing the next turn of the page.

'It doesn't matter.' Miss Cundall's dry lips tweaked into something like a smile. 'They're a gift. I was very fond of Frances Hodgson Burnett when I was a child. Have you read her tales?'

Mrs Ray shook her head.

'No.' The teacher glanced across at the photographs on the shelf. 'I realise that you're not a bookish household.'

Well, there was an encyclopedia right there, and a Bible next to it, so that was uncalled for. Mrs Ray bridled. 'Having time for it would be a fine thing.'

'We all make time for what we consider important.' Miss Cundall was at the end of a long day. She was longing to ungrip the braided hair band and be alone, but doggedly she went on. 'Eleanor's obviously been very well supported in the past, and it would be a shame for her to be held back now… '

Mrs Ray could hardly believe it. She was being compared to Clara Linnet — shiftless, idle, half-pickled Clara Linnet — and found wanting!

'…public library…' Miss Cundall was saying. '…regularity…opportunities…this pamphlet.'

She was thrusting something into Mrs Ray's hand.

'I thought you might've come about Isaac,' Sheila said.

In the kitchen, Isaac's heart skipped.

His mam rushed on. 'The other two didn't struggle like he does. You know, he can't name his letters yet, even, not all of them. There's a lad two streets up who's backwards, and he's further on than that.'

Miss Cundall heard it as a complaint. She was crisp. 'Isaac needs to apply himself more. And his attendance is the worst in the class, I've spoken to you about this before, Mrs Ray — there!'

The rising tone made Isaac think for a second that he'd been discovered, though he was behind a wall. Mrs Ray was startled too. But Miss Cundall was pointing at Ellie. 'See that? How she pushes her finger into her ear? She's been doing it all day. When were her hearing aids last checked?'

'I —' The switch of subject discomposed Mrs Ray. When — ? Well. There'd been an appointment letter, and a cancellation and she wasn't quite clear about what was supposed to happen next. 'Well — I don't know.'

'You'd better chase it up,' Miss Cundall rose and prodded her stiff hairband into place. 'Something's bothering her. Good night Mrs Ray. I'll see you tomorrow, Eleanor.'

Though she had raised her voice, there was no reaction.

'Ellie!' Mrs Ray said sharply. 'Ellie!'

Ellie's pale face jerked up, dark hair flying, to give both women a blank stare, then dropped again. Her breathing slowed, she was deep in another world. Isaac, daring to slide into the room as the front door creaked, only wished he had some way like that to hide himself in plain sight.

A leaflet was lying in the chair where his mam had been sat. Thick black type on shiny paper. Isaac picked it up, conscious of Ellie's even, slow breathing on the other side of the room. Ryaol. Rayol, Roayl. His eyes slid down, to a number that had been underlined, so must be important. A two. Or perhaps a five. Tpis. Tsip. Sod it. Behind him, the quiet flip of Ellie's page kept turning. In a burst of frustration, he balled the leaflet up in his hand and chucked it at her, but it missed, and her attention didn't even flicker.

Outside, on the doorstep, Sheila was giving stiff thanks, but Miss Cundall cut them short. 'It's no more than my duty, as I see it, Mrs Ray. Goodbye.'

Being liked was unimportant, Miss Cundall told herself as she plodded off into the night. She wasn't the sort of teacher who counted her value by presents or cards at the end of the year, which was fortunate, since she didn't get many. Checking her watch, she found that she'd missed her direct bus, so it'd be an

hour's wait at the connection. Virtue was its own reward, but a chilly one. Glancing back from the corner, Miss Cundall found only a row of closed doors. Mrs Ray must have already gone in.

Sheila had given the door a bit of a slam too, and not just because it was stiff. The teacher's last remark had hinted that Sheila was failing in her duty. At least, that was how it sounded. Churning it over in her mind, Mrs Ray made a start on the pie that she'd promised to take across to Vera tomorrow, and forgot all about the pamphlet. Later on, she found a scrunched piece of paper behind the sofa but just chucked it into the bin along with the rest of the daily clutter.

## Royal National Society for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

More than one in a thousand children under sixteen in the UK are deaf or hard of hearing.

Very few of these hear no sound at all. Medically, someone with a profound hearing loss (80 decibels or more) may be described as 'deaf', while a less severe loss would usually be described as 'hard of hearing'.

### 5 Tips for Communicating with a Child With Hearing Loss

1. Get the child's attention before beginning to speak. If he is startled, or misses part of your conversation, then he will find it harder to connect with what you are saying.

2. Make sure the child can see your face clearly, in good light. Don't stand with your back to the window. Don't block your face with hands, or a cup, or a cigarette. Remove dark glasses. A beard will interfere with communication. Remember that your expression and body language carry a large part of your message.

3. Reduce background noise and make sure that only one person is talking at a time. Speak clearly (don't mumble or shout) but not too slowly and don't exaggerate your lip movements. The natural tone and rhythm of your voice convey meaning.

4. Be explicit. Make sure the child knows the context of the conversation first. (Say, 'Tomorrow morning, when you go to school, don't forget to take your reading book', not, 'Don't forget your book tomorrow.') Knowing the context will help him interpret what you are saying. If he doesn't understand you, rephrase the whole sentence, not just one word. (Don't just say 'Book!') An isolated word makes little sense to anyone.

5. Try not to get angry or frustrated. The child will focus on this emotion, rather than what you are trying to say. Sarcasm, where the tone is at cross-purposes with the content, will be confusing. Remain calm and be consistent.

# Appendix A. Why should consciousness differ for the deafblind?

## A.1 Overview of appendix

In this appendix, I apply thinking from the fields of both consciousness studies and disability studies to the subject of sensory loss, with the aim of producing a theoretical framework for understanding the practical effects of sensory impairment on the mind. I do not seek to join the debate about 'what, precisely, is consciousness?' or 'through what biological mechanisms does it operate?' but I position myself within the faction that maintains that the 'neural underpinnings' of conscious experience cannot and should not be separated from those of cognitive function.[1] I will use some of the arguments advanced on this side of the debate to shed light on my area of enquiry.

In sections A.2 to A.4 I lay out the foundations of my argument, situating my investigation within the overall debate in the field of consciousness studies and then considering how the study of sensory impairment is currently approached within the field. I determine that this is used primarily to examine what such biological malfunctions reveal about the processing of an assumed 'standard' consciousness. I then question an implicit presupposition of this stance; that there is no more fundamental difference in the consciousness of a sensory impaired person than a set of missing perceptual inputs. Using an illustrative example, I describe the particular social effects on communication and mutual social understanding that are endemic to deafblindness. I then posit that by force of repetition such experiences influence the impaired individual's interaction with the social world in a way that can produce a structural alteration to the operation of his or her consciousness.

At this point, in section A.5, I address an important potential criticism raised by disability scholars: is it a confusion in terms to mix impairment and social context, and perhaps even disablist to suggest that this interplay results in a fundamental change to the impaired person's consciousness? The influential social model of disability would seem to say so: through this reading, impairment is a bodily function entirely separate from social environment. Thus, the

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[1] Michael A. Cohen and Daniel C. Dennett, 'Consciousness Cannot be Separated from Function', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences,* 15, 8 (Aug. 2011), 358–64, p. 359.

restrictive norms of society create social exclusion for the impaired individual, and this should be confronted rather than being considered intrinsic to the impairment. However, building upon disability scholarship by Carol Thomas, I argue against this interpretation. Thomas's theory of 'bio-social phenomena' shows that impairment and social setting can interact to produce real (and potentially disabling) effects that are separate to the rectifiable issue of social exclusion. Thomas's work principally covers physical impairment and I am now extending it to the area of sensory impairment.

Having established the context and justification for my line of enquiry, I then advance further into the field of consciousness studies with sections A.6 and A.7, drawing in particular upon the work of philosopher of mind Daniel Dennett. Taking up his 'Multiple Drafts' model of consciousness, I apply this theory of 'constant editorial revisions' to an illustrative example of deafblind experience. This allows me to show that Dennett's investigation into the interaction of mind and environment is of particular relevance to the interplay between sensory impairment and social setting. I then extend his theory further, also drawing on neurobiological work by Francis Crick and Christof Koch, to posit that a deafblind person's consciousness may be fundamentally altered through gaining conscious awareness (through an 'overlearning' process of repetitive experience) of the existence of these multiple drafts. Whereas Dennett's model describes the brain probing itself to produce consecutive drafts of 'reality' that are stitched together to produce a seeming unity of conscious experience, I posit that a deafblind person will tend to construct contemporaneous drafts of alternative possibilities. I describe this as the 'Provisionality Principle'.

Finally, in section A.8 I discuss further the impact of this potential structural difference in conscious experience in terms of 'what it is like' to be sensory impaired. This feeds into the investigation within Chapter 2 into how narrative techniques can be deployed to represent such a difference in fictional form.

**A.2 Framing the debate: where this fits within the overall field of consciousness studies**

**A.2.1 'Feel' versus 'knowledge': what people mean when they talk about consciousness**

There is no commonly agreed definition of 'consciousness', not even within a single discipline such as medicine or philosophy. Philosopher of mind Güven Güzeldere has suggested that it is best regarded as a 'cluster concept'.[2] Bound within the cluster of meanings is one that we all intuitively recognise but which commentators struggle furiously to explain: the private, subjective 'feel' of our conscious experience. In 1983, Joseph Levine described an 'explanatory gap' between scientific description and qualitative experience; giving as an example the fact that the physiological mechanism of pain (the firing of C-fibres) tells us nothing about how pain feels.[3] In 1993, he refined his argument, defining the explanatory gap as the knowledge that 'there is an element in our concept of qualitative character that is not captured by features of its causal role'.[4] Shortly afterwards, David Chalmers lit a fuse under the debate which burns as brightly today as it did then, with his differentiation between the 'easy problems' and the 'hard problem' of consciousness:

> The easy problems of consciousness are those that seem directly susceptible to the standard methods of cognitive science, whereby a phenomenon is explained in terms of computational or neural mechanisms. The hard problems are those that seem to resist those methods.[5]

Thus, the 'easy problems' require a scientific explanation of the brain's cognitive functions; for example, discrimination, reportability of mental states, focus of attention, control of behaviour. The 'hard problem of consciousness' seeks an explanation of the subjective quality of conscious experience, often described as 'what it is like to be', after Thomas Nagel's influential 1974 essay 'What is it Like To Be a Bat?' in which Nagel concluded that neither subjective imagination (our own experience is too unlike theirs) nor objective enquiry (the full facts about

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[2] Güzeldere, p. 22.
[3] Joseph Levine, 'Materialism and Qualia: the Explanatory Gap', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly,* 64, 354–61.
[4] Joseph Levine, 'On Leaving Out What It's Like', in *The Nature of Psychological Explanation*, ed. by M. Davies and G. Humphreys (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 121–36, repr. in Block, Flanagan and Güzeldere, pp. 543–56, p. 553.
[5] David J. Chalmers, 'Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies,* 2, 3 (1995), 200–19, p. 200.

being a bat are not accessible to human understanding) could allow us to appreciate how it feels to be a bat.[6] As Güzeldere shows, the 'easy problem' is generally characterised in causal terms — what it does — and the 'hard problem' in phenomenal terms — how it feels. He expands on these two characterisations: 'Causal' takes an objective third-person perspective and focuses on the active role that consciousness plays in our cognition. 'Phenomenal' takes a subjective first-person perspective and focuses on how our inner mental lives 'seem' to us.[7] At the heart of this phenomenal consciousness lies the concept of qualia: intensely personal subjective experiences that cannot be fully conveyed to others. Susan Blackmore describes the quale, and gives examples:

> The experience is private, ineffable and has a quality all its own. […] The feel of the wind on your cheeks as you ride your bike is a quale […]. The sight of the browny-pink skin on your hand is a quale. The ineffable chill of delight that you experience every time you hear that minor chord.[8]

Other common examples of qualia include the smell of fresh coffee and the sight of the colour red. Each of us, it would seem, experiences these in our own unsharable way: 'The term is used to emphasise quality, to get away from talking about physical properties or descriptions, and to point to experience itself.'[9]

Blackmore goes on to identify various philosophical positions according to their stance on qualia:

> The substance dualist believes that qualia (e.g. the smell of coffee) are part of a separate mental world from physical objects (e.g. pots of coffee or brains). The epiphenomenalist believes that qualia exist but have no causal properties. The idealist believes that everything is ultimately qualia. The eliminative materialist denies that qualia exist, and so on.[10]

Many, perhaps even most of us intuitively accept the existence of qualia and their special status in our mind, separate from our cognitive faculties. As philosopher of mind Ned Block argues, we have proof of the distinct nature of its existence within ourselves 'because our fundamental access to phenomenal consciousness derives from our acquaintance with it.'[11] Although it is likely that

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[6] Thomas Nagel, 'What is it Like to Be a Bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, 83, 4 (Oct. 1974), 435–50.
[7] Güzeldere, pp. 26–28.
[8] Susan J. Blackmore, *Consciousness: An Introduction*, 4th edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 26.
[9] Ibid, p. 26.
[10] Ibid, p. 26.
[11] Ned Joel Block, 'Begging the Question against Phenomenal Consciousness', in Block, Flanagan and Güzeldere, pp. 175–80, p. 175.

no one in the field of consciousness studies today would explicitly espouse Cartesian dualism to the extent of saying that phenomenal consciousness/qualia is/are utterly non-physical; many, Block amongst them, support the idea that the physical explanation for qualia must be separate from the mechanism for cognitive function. Block undertakes a similar exercise to Blackmore when he ranges the principal commentators in the field according to where they stand on Chalmers' 'hard problem'; the apparent disjunct between scientific explanation and phenomenal feel. He places himself in the camp of contemporary 'phenomenal realism' or 'inflationism', amongst those who believe that although 'consciousness plays a causal role and its nature may be found empirically as the sciences advance', nevertheless, it 'cannot be conceptually reduced […] in nonphenomenal terms'.[12] In other words, that although a non-phenomenal neural mechanism may be found for how consciousness operates, this cannot explain its phenomenal 'feel' to us. However, other factions of theorists insist that this 'feel' is an illusion, and a dangerous one at that. They reject the distinction between causal and phenomenal consciousness. Block describes this divide of opinion as 'a great chasm' between thinkers in the field: 'On one side are those who accept a concept of consciousness distinct from any cognitive or information processing or functional notion; on the other side are those who reject any such concept.'[13]

## A.2.2 'Feel' as a by-product of 'knowledge': contextualising Dennett

Facing Block across this chasm stands Daniel Dennett, a controversial philosopher of mind, who believes that when a thorough, advanced theoretical framework for consciousness has been constructed, there will be no mysterious unexplained phenomenology left over.[14] Block characterises Dennett's early career as an espousal of eliminativism: 'the view that consciousness as understood […] [in terms of phenomenality] simply does not exist', and his later position as philosophical reductionism or deflationism: 'allowing that consciousness exists, but […] taking it to amount to less than meets the eye';

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[12] Ned Joel Block, 'Consciousness', *Consciousness, Function, and Representation: Collected Papers* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 111–28, p. 112.
[13] Block, 'Begging the Question', p. 175.
[14] Dennett's argument is laid out most clearly in *Consciousness Explained*.

thus claiming that it 'can be conceptually analyzed in nonphenomenal terms […] [such as] behavioral, functional, representational and cognitive.'[15]

Dennett himself resists limiting his theory to a 'slogan', but describes his 'fundamental strategy' as two-pronged: 'first, to develop an account of content that is independent of and more fundamental than consciousness — an account of content that treats equally of all unconscious content-fixation […] — and second to build an account of consciousness on that foundation. First content, then consciousness.'[16] He asserts that despite our experience of phenomenal consciousness, it only 'seems' to us to exist in this way, and that it is this mechanism of 'seeming' which we need to explain rather than the concept of phenomenal consciousness as an actual entity. In accordance with this, Dennett declares that 'there simply are no qualia at all' and that what people describe when they talk about qualia are not, in fact, ineffable properties in their own right but dispositional properties of our brains: 'if you really understood everything about the nervous system, you'd understand everything about the properties people are actually talking about when they claim to be talking about their qualia.'[17] Thus, Dennett also denies the existence of Chalmers' 'hard problem', insisting that to divide the problem of consciousness into 'easy' and 'hard' parts is 'a major misdirector of attention, an illusion-generator'.[18] Evidence of this alleged misdirection in operation may be found in Block's contribution to a collection of neuroscience essays. The collection focuses on the discipline's ultimate aim: to map the brain and create an 'atlas' of all 85 billion neurons, showing how they are organised and what function they perform. Block adds a sceptical note: reiterating his belief that 'the neural basis of consciousness does not include the neural basis of actual cognitive access', he goes further, insisting that there is a fundamental problem preventing scientists from isolating this neural basis for phenomenal consciousness.[19] Because researchers can only know whether an experimental subject is having 'a conscious percept' as opposed to an 'unconscious percept' if the subject tells them so, therefore, Block

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[15] Block, 'Consciousness', p. 112.
[16] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, pp. 460, 457.
[17] Ibid, p. 460.
[18] Daniel C. Dennett, 'Facing Backwards on the Question of Consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies,* 3, 1 (1996), 4–6, pp. 4–6.
[19] Ned Joel Block, 'Consciousness, Big Science and Conceptual Clarity', in *The Future of the Brain: Essays by the World's Leading Neuroscientists,* ed. by Gary Marcus and Jeremy Freeman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 161–76, p. 166.

believes, they must resign themselves 'to studying what I have called "access consciousness," that is, an amalgamation of the machinery of consciousness together with the machinery of conscious access.'[20] Never mind solving the 'hard' problem of *why* the experience of red is qualitatively different from the experience of green, says Block, we cannot yet (and may never) take the necessary prior step of establishing *what* the brain basis for the experience of red actually is, because the private nature of phenomenal consciousness means that external enquirers cannot disentangle it from purely cognitive processing. Thus, Block discards neuroscientific contributions to the 'hard problem': 'massive quantities of data alone cannot produce the theoretical breakthroughs in understanding the mind at a psychological level'.[21] A philosophical framework is required: 'isolating consciousness in the brain may depend more on being clear about what we are looking for'.[22] For Block, this clarity entails an *a priori* separation of phenomenal consciousness and cognition.

This mindset also informs research. Francis Crick and Christof Koch, leading lights in the field of neuroscience, bow to the belief that scientific method alone will not be enough. While putting together a neuroscientific framework of consciousness, they rule out a head-on approach to 'the problem of qualia' as 'fruitless' and instead concentrate on 'attempting to find the neural correlate(s) of consciousness (NCC) in the hope that when we can explain the NCC in causal terms, this will make the problem of qualia clearer'.[23] Yet, when Crick and Koch explain that 'the NCC is the minimal set of neuronal events that gives rise to a specific aspect of a conscious percept […] such as perceiving the specific colour, shape or movement of an object', surely we must ask why exactly do they believe that this would not describe qualia — redness, say?[24] Could the operation of a set of neural correlates of consciousness, in itself, fully described, become a sufficient explanation for the phenomenal 'feel' of an experience? By starting off with the presumption that there must be something more to qualia than that for which they are looking, Crick and Koch tacitly exclude the possibility of discovering that there is not. This exclusion is built in as a self-limiting feature within the scientific framework that they are careful to define: 'A framework is not

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[20] Ibid, p. 163.
[21] Ibid, p. 161.
[22] Ibid, p. 175.
[23] Francis Crick and Christof Koch, 'A Framework for Consciousness', *Nature Neuroscience,* 6, 2 (Feb. 2003), 119–26, p. 119.
[24] Ibid, p. 119.

a detailed hypothesis or set of hypotheses; rather it is a suggested point of view for an attack on a scientific problem, often suggesting testable hypotheses.'[25] Speaking generally, Cohen and Dennett insist that because such 'partitioning of conscious experience from cognitive function is common in neurobiological theories of consciousness' this means that the hypotheses generated are 'fundamentally incapable of explaining the full scope of consciousness'.[26]

Such persistent, lingering dualism led Damasio to describe Descartes' denial of the mind's 'material, physical, biological nature' as 'pernicious', because its legacy prevents scientists from clearly framing the right investigative approach.[27] The Cartesian imprint becomes more explicit when Crick and Koch imagine that 'the front of the brain is "looking at" the sensory systems, most of which are at the back of the brain'.[28] Acknowledging that this 'observer within', the 'homunculus' inside the brain is an unfashionable idea today, they comment that 'this is, after all, how everyone thinks of themselves. It would be surprising if this overwhelming illusion did not reflect in some way the general organisation of the brain.'[29] This example, I suggest, encapsulates Damasio's objection. Such ingrained dualism 'informs virtually all research on mind and brain, explicitly or implicitly, and is certainly the common sense concept of the nonscientist and nonphilosopher in the street'.[30] In a cogent analysis of how and why the illusion persists, David Papineau reinforces the point that, culturally and linguistically, we are pre-set to have a false intuition of dualism:

> if only we were able fully to persuade ourselves of mind-brain identities, we would see that they leave nothing unexplained. The problem is that we find it very hard to believe such identities. We all experience an intuitive resistance to identifications of phenomenal kinds with material kinds. At an intuitive level, we are all implicit dualists.[31]

Speaking from an experimental psychology perspective, William Banks and Ilya Farber concur:

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[25] Ibid, p. 119
[26] Cohen and Dennett, p. 359.
[27] Antonio R. Damasio, 'Descartes' Error Revisited', *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences: Basic and Clinical Perspectives*, 10, 2 (2001), 192–94, p. 193.
[28] Crick and Koch, 'A framework', p. 120.
[29] Ibid, p. 120.
[30] Antonio R. Damasio, 'The Selfless Consciousness', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences,* 15, 2 (June 1992), pp. 208–09, p. 208.
[31] David Papineau, 'What Exactly is the Explanatory Gap?', *Philosophia,* 39 (2011), 5–19, p. 11. He adds that there may possibly be biological underpinnings to the illusion of duality, through the structure of our cognitive architecture. (p. 15).

> This model — mind as a container of ideas with windows to the world for perception at one end and for action at the other — is consistent with a wide range of metaphors about mind, thought, perception and intention […]. The folk theory has enormous power because it defines common sense and provides the basis for intuition. In addition, the assumptions are typically implicit and unexamined. For all these reasons, the folk model can be very tenacious. […] We used the container model in the previous sentence when we referred to 'intentions generated in consciousness'. This is such a familiar metaphor that we forget it is a metaphor. Within this container, the 'Cartesian Theater' so named by Dennett is a dominant metaphor for the way thinking takes place. We say that we *see* an idea (on the stage), that we have an idea *in* our mind, that we are putting something *out* of mind, that we are holding an image *in* our mind's eye, and so on. Perceptions or ideas or intentions are brought forth in the conscious theatre, and they are examined and dispatched 'in the light of reason'.[32]

As Banks and Farber note, Dennett described our ingrained dualist illusions about our minds in terms of a model he named the 'Cartesian Theater'. This model has been widely discussed in the field of consciousness studies and beyond. The next section will describe it in preparation for drawing a contrast with Dennett's preferred model for a non-intuitive but in his view more accurate understanding of the way our minds operate: his 'Multiple Drafts' theory.

### A.2.3 Dennett's models of consciousness: 'Cartesian Theater' replaced by 'Multiple Drafts'

Dennett's model of the 'Cartesian Theater' is named to suggest an internal movie theatre within the brain, which plays a private film of subjective experience ('phenomenal consciousness'). It reifies the dualist illusion of a place in the mind 'where whatever happens "in consciousness" really happens, whether or not it is later correctly remembered'.[33] The 'Cartesian Theater' is thus intended to embody a convincing but incorrect 'metaphorical picture of how conscious experience must sit in the brain'.[34] The implied watcher of such a film, the observer within, is the 'homunculus' that Crick and Koch find so persuasive but which Dennett condemns as 'our old nemesis, the Audience in the Cartesian Theater': 'Your consciousness does not consist in the fact that your brain is

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[32] William P. Banks and Ilya Farber, 'Consciousness', in Irving B. Weiner, Alice F. Healy, Robert W. Proctor (eds) *Handbook of Psychology Volume 4: Experimental Psychology, Handbook of Psychology,* 2nd edn, 12 vols (Hoboken NJ: Wiley, 2012), IV, pp. 3–31, p. 6.
[33] Dennett*, Consciousness Explained*, p. 132.
[34] Ibid, p. 107.

occupied by an inner agent to whom your brain presents displays.'[35] Dennett also gives a name to the covertly dualistic belief that underpins the 'feel' of consciousness as a unified flow of subjective perception: 'Cartesian Materialism', 'since it's the idea you arrive at when you discard Descartes' dualism but fail to discard the imagery of a central (but material) Theater where it "all comes together"'.[36]

Dennett has been criticised for appearing to claim that other commentators believe this to happen in a single physical locus within the brain, which few, if any, do: 'He tilts at caricatures', complains Block.[37] In opposition to this perceived straw man, Block sets up an analogous concept: 'Cartesian Modularism', a model 'that treats phenomenal consciousness as something that could be accomplished by a distinct system', a distributed network across the brain.[38] Yet this alternative formulation is still, in effect, a single place where 'how it feels' occurs in the brain; just a functional one rather than a physical one. It remains predicated on a separation between consciousness and content: 'The idea is that phenomenal consciousness is distinct (at least conceptually) from that information processing function.'[39] Thus, Block's alternative does not sidestep Dennett's point, which is that the 'Cartesian Theater' is a metaphorical model for the way we instinctively and implicitly theorise our minds. Indeed, Dennett is clear that he does not think that people explicitly hold this view, rather that they are apparently unable to escape it:

> Perhaps no-one today explicitly endorses Cartesian materialism. Many theorists would insist that they have explicitly rejected such an obviously bad idea. But as we shall see, the persuasive imagery of the Cartesian Theater keeps coming back to haunt us — laypeople and scientists alike — even after its ghostly dualism has been denounced and exorcized. […] The idea of a special center in the brain is the most tenacious bad idea bedeviling our attempts to think about consciousness. As we shall see, it keeps reasserting itself, in new guises, and for ostensibly compelling reasons.[40]

Rather like the metaphors of sensory loss examined in this thesis, the 'Cartesian Theater' concept, of an essential conscious self that scrutinises our

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[35] Ibid, p. 445.
[36] Ibid, p. 107.
[37] Ned Joel Block, 'Review of Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*', *The Journal of Philosophy,* 90, 4 (1993), 181–93, repr. in Block, *Consciousness, Function, and Representation*, pp. 129–40, p. 129.
[38] Ned Joel Block, 'On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 18 (1995), 227–87, p. 229.
[39] Ibid, p. 229.
[40] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, pp. 107–08.

perceptions from within, is so entrenched in language and thought that it is hard to escape. In opposition to this intuitive, but illogical, way of thinking about minds, Dennett proposes his own 'deeply counterintuitive' alternative: the 'Multiple Drafts' model, which 'requires a quite radical rethinking of the familiar idea of the "stream of consciousness".[41] In sections A.6 to A.8, I shall come on to explain the model and discuss it in greater detail, unpicking Dennett's conception of the 'stream of consciousness' in particular.

### A.2.4 Consciousness and deafblindness: taking sides in the debate

After this necessarily brief survey of the polarised debate on the nature of consciousness, it might initially appear that my own investigation into the question of 'what it is like to be sensory impaired' belongs within the study of phenomenal consciousness as a private and unique experience separate from cognitive content, following the various leads of Nagel, Chalmers, and Block. Nagel has certainly endorsed this view, using the deafblind person as an extreme example of an 'unimaginable' experience: 'The subjective character of the experience of a person deaf and blind from birth is not accessible to me, for example, nor is mine to him. This does not prevent us each from believing that the other's experience has such a subjective character.'[42]

From this standpoint, the sensory impaired person's conscious experience will be missing an array of visual or auditory qualia. To provide a case study, I will speak personally about Blackmore's examples of qualia that were discussed earlier. The deterioration of the photo-receptor cells in my retinas means that I can no longer discriminate the specific 'browny-pink' colour of someone's skin from a range of other shades. Nor does a minor chord give me an 'ineffable chill of delight' since many of the receptor hair cells in my inner ears were damaged before birth, thus preventing the correlative sound waves from being converted into neural signals for processing by my brain. Indeed, even if one sides (as I do) with Dennett to say that qualia do not exist, and therefore conclude that there cannot be an ineffable, pre-determined qualitative state that being sensory impaired is 'like', the case may still appear temptingly simple. If we agree with Dennett that our 'seeming' qualitative sense of the world is a product of our neural processing, then do not those missing inputs still

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[41] Ibid, p. 17.
[42] Nagel, p. 440.

produce a straightforward impoverishment, possibly compensated for to certain extents by adaptation? For example, Dennett gives consideration to how 'the blind produce their own methods of spatial imagining'.[43]

I would have to answer 'No!' Instead, I posit that a more complex process of adaptation takes place, involving an interplay between two significant elements — physical and social — that has the ability to produce a structurally different 'seeming'. The bodily differences in a sensory impaired person's perceptual inputs are only one part of the equation: the other part emerges from the sociocultural engagement engendered by the impairment, rather than from the impairment itself. Over the remaining sections of this appendix, I shall argue that a deafblind person gains a cognitive knowledge of the 'differences' between his or her own perceptions and those of other, unimpaired people; a knowledge which is gradually learned through discussion and interaction. In doing so, I shall be rejecting Nagel's hypothesis about the unknowability of the deafblind mind, and embarking upon the beginnings of an answer to what Dennett describes as an 'interesting question': 'what differences, if any, can be found in the styles of abstract thinking adopted by those born blind or deaf'?[44] To accomplish this, I shall follow Dennett's lead in refusing to separate processes of 'rationality' and of 'seeming', instead accepting that the two are indivisible parts of the same apparatus. I shall also draw upon his ideas about the role of language in developing consciousness (both in evolutionary terms and in the lifecycle of the individual). Finally, I shall be addressing his 'Multiple Drafts' model of consciousness and using it to develop a further sensory-impaired-specific model of my own: the 'Provisionality Principle'.

## A.3 'Normal' consciousness and sensory impairment: the current picture

Disability studies academic Simi Linton has pointed out that much disability-related research, both in science and in the social sciences, examines disabled people 'as deviation from the norm in order to increase the knowledge about and stature of the norm', and is thus 'designed to learn about standard functioning by measuring deficits and anomalies in disabled people'.[45] Certainly, within the field of consciousness studies, there is a significant body of work describing abnormal visual perception from the perspective of finding out what such 'malfunctions'

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[43] Dennett, *Kinds of Minds,* p. 146.
[44] Ibid, p. 146.
[45] Linton, *Claiming Disability*, p. 73.

reveal about an assumed 'normal' consciousness. To take a representative example, Martha J. Farah describes studies on four different visual/brain syndromes (blindsight, prosopagnosia, neglect and extinction, and alexia).[46] Farah applies the suggested explanations for each of these syndromes to the three major models of consciousness ('privileged role', where perception systems pass information to a 'consciousness awareness system'; 'integration accounts', where separately represented perceptual properties are 'bound together'; and 'quality of representation', where consciousness is 'a graded property of neural information', less present when a representation is poor quality, and more present when it is high quality). By determining whether the malfunction of each syndrome is coherent with each model of typically functioning consciousness, Farah draws some tentative conclusions about the relative value of these models for understanding 'normal' consciousness. This is standard practice in neuroscience, as Farah makes clear in her introduction to the revised edition of her book on this subject: 'Virtually everything we know about the brain functions underlying human cognition has been learned by one of two methods: studying brain-lesioned patients and functional neuroimaging.'[47] As Farah explains; since the first edition of her book in 1990, a 'methodological revolution' has been brought about by the introduction of neuroimaging, which allows the neural systems of 'normal subjects' to be visualised.[48] Before this, the only way to find out about 'normal brains, which are the subject of interest' was to study patients with specific types of abnormal vision stemming from brain damage — or 'nature's experiments', as Farah uncomfortably terms them.[49]

I argue that this approach, although its purpose is clear enough, obscures an important issue. Not only is it predicated on attributing a lesser status to those with impairments, who are studied in order to find out about those who are 'normal' but there is a further inherent danger. This danger lies in assuming that the differences between the impaired and non-impaired mind are mainly, or even solely, to do with the physical area of impairment: the lesion that knocks out a specific area of sensory processing in the brain; or the reduction in perceptual inputs from damaged sense organs. The implicit presupposition is

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[46] Martha J. Farah, 'Visual Perception and Visual Awareness after Brain Damage: A Tutorial Overview', in Block, Flanagan and Güzeldere, pp. 203–36.
[47] Martha J. Farah, *Visual Agnosia*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 1.
[48] Ibid, p. 5.
[49] Ibid, pp. 6, 2.

that there is no more fundamental difference in the consciousness of the impaired individual. This is the point that I challenge.

To do so, I will call upon the fully body-based theory of mind that Dennett proposes, which posits that, through evolutionary processes, our ancient biochemical hormonal systems were eventually supplemented by the electrical autonomic nervous system, and later still by the central nervous system. This gave evolutionary advantage through swifter reactions and a different distribution of control. However, neural networks for animals 'evolved as the control systems of organisms that already were lavishly equipped with highly distributed control systems, and the new systems had to be built on top of, and in deep collaboration with, these earlier systems'.[50] Appreciating the complexity of the biological integration of the body-brain system means that we must 'abandon the crisp identification of the mind with the brain and let it spread to other parts of the body'.[51] This is the foundation for Dennett's philosophical objection to the separation of cognitive and phenomenal consciousness: 'One cannot tear me apart from my body leaving a nice clean edge, as philosophers have often supposed. My body contains as much of *me*, the values and talents and memories and dispositions that make me who I am, as my nervous system does.'[52]

This 'embodied mind' is a useful way to think about sensory impairment. Rather than imagining a 'clean-edged', isolatable mind-capsule plugged into a variable-quality stream of perceptions (of lesser quantity or lower quality in the impaired case, greater quantity or higher quality in the unimpaired) which uses the same processes in either case to make the best decision with the available data, we can model something which opens the door for a structural difference between the experience of the sensory impaired and the unimpaired. I will come on to suggest that it is the 'knowledge through experience' of impairment which is the critical factor: the person who learns, through repeated experience within social settings, that sensory data is questionable also learns to invest not just conclusions, but even initial impressions, with less certainty.

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[50] Dennett, *Kinds of Minds*, p. 75.
[51] Ibid, p. 78.
[52] Ibid, p. 77.

## A.4 Sensory impairment in the social context: how experience teaches uncertainty

I will begin with an imaginary example. If you (as an unimpaired person) and I (as a hearing–and–vision–impaired one) pass one another as we stroll along a beach, enjoying the sunset, we will, of course, have different qualitative experiences, as would two unimpaired people. So far, so uninteresting. Let us consider then what happens if you — unaware of my impairment — raise your hand as you pass and say 'hello' and I, oblivious to this, seem to see you but walk on stony-faced without a word. You may well interpret my behaviour as rude: by usual standards, it is, I have 'deliberately' ignored you. Our next interaction, should there be one, will be informed by this conferral of meaning. Perhaps you will act coldly towards me, intimating your disapproval. I may notice this, but misattribute its cause, resulting in a further action on my part. And so on.

Of course, such social misadventures are endemic to all interaction, whether or not impairment is involved. Indeed, my example could be criticised as being more a problem of misinformation (the impairment is 'hidden') than one of impairment itself: if the unimpaired person knows about the other's impairment, they will interpret the situation differently, 'allowing for' the lack of acknowledgement and preventing the misunderstanding. I have three rebuttals to this:

First, there are inevitably many such 'hidden' situations in the round of daily life, and therefore the deafblind person has constant experience of this type of misunderstanding. Repetition has its effects. In an anthropologically oriented overview of studies on sensory impairment in different ethnographies, Elizabeth Keating and R. Neill Hadder point to 'an experience of embodied uncertainty, instability, and transience owing to communicative differences for deaf people in a hearing-speaking world'.[53]

Secondly, making one's impairment known (in effect wearing it like an amulet to ward off misinterpretation) rarely helps the situation. Keating and Hadder explain:

> Indexical use of conversational participants' bodies, such as pointing 'over there' and 'that way,' along with similar assumptions that the hearer and speaker share visual access to their space, are very difficult for

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[53] Elizabeth Keating and R. Neill Hadder, 'Sensory Impairment', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39 (2010), 115–29, pp. 119–20.

> sighted people to bring to consciousness in verbal interaction and thereby thwart sighted–visually impaired interactions.[54]

The mere fact of being non-impaired does not confer the ability to recognise where the barriers to communication lie, let alone to mitigate for them. Sensory impairments are difficult for others to understand: why is it that a person who needs a white cane to get on and off the train may still be able to read a book during their journey — are they, perhaps, faking? Awareness of an impairment can thus create a further set of interpretative issues.

Thirdly, and most subtly, the mere fact of the impairment being known may put its own slant on the interaction. By calling into play the prejudices, incorrect assumptions, and instinctive metaphoricisation that Chapter 1 uncovered, it risks making one's 'meaning in the world' solely about the impairment, thereby irrevocably distorting the encounter. Disability theorists have written at length about the psychological and sociocultural effects of 'labelling' the impaired.[55] Spread effects, whereby a specific impairment is assumed to connote generalised incapacity are common: one frequently given example being how 'outsiders raise their voices at blind people'.[56] Keating and Hadder identify the cause of unimpaired people's misconceptions, which produce situations in which 'deaf or blind people will frequently be treated as if they lack mental competence as well':

> Virtually all forms of competence are assumed to require sight or hearing because in many cases alternate strategies for accomplishing those tasks have not been imagined and the outward display of those strategies will not readily be recognized as displays of competence.[57]

Rather than solving the problem of miscommunication, disclosure may well inject a fresh set of misunderstandings between the impaired person and their social environment.

Thus I hope I have shown that the disruption to the flow of interaction between the impaired person and their social environment is both real and incessant. The experience of sensory impairment and, in particular, of dual sensory impairment is under constant assault by such occurrences. Even more

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[54] Ibid, p. 122.

[55] For example, by Donna Reeve, 'Psycho-emotional disablism: the missing link?', in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. by Nick Watson and Alan Roulscone (Abingdon: Routlege, 2012), pp. 78–92.

[56] Elizabeth F. Emens, 'Disabling Attitudes: U.S. Disability Law and the ADA Amendments Act', in Davis (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader*, pp. 42–60, p. 43.

[57] Keating and Hadder, p. 122.

importantly, the ability of the sensory impaired person to manage the resulting situations is limited, because, in any social transaction, the sensory impaired person (and in particular, the dual sensory impaired person) is dealing with an asymmetric set of information: they pick up fewer clues about what meanings are being created. Like a foreigner trying to negotiate an unfamiliar culture, the impaired person may not be easily able to determine when they have given offence, nor sense how to adjust the situation. A limitation is therefore placed on the ability to control an interaction. But does this have a significant effect on the impaired person's consciousness? I argue that it does. I shall come on to show that this friction in the engine of social interaction not only changes the way a sensory impaired person behaves, but may fundamentally alter the way in which their mind apprehends. First, however, I must address the potential criticism that I mentioned earlier: is it a confusion of terms to suggest that impairment interacts with social setting? Is it perhaps even disablist, to suggest, as I shall, that sensory impairment can alter the internal workings of one's consciousness?

## A.5 Biosocial phenomena and interaction: a theoretical underpinning for the interplay of impairment and social environment

When assessing the results of the interplay between impairment and its social effects, the existing body of work within the field of disability studies must be considered. A great deal has been written about disability and the social environment. From its activist roots in the 1960s and 1970s, the fast-growing area of disability studies was founded on the conviction that disability (as opposed to physical impairment) was in fact a social construct, defined by the unnecessary and non-innate exclusion of the impaired individual from important functions within society. This required a rejection of the traditional sociological medicalised model of disability, which constituted it as a personal tragedy that causes unavoidable social deviance. The hugely influential social model developed by Michael Oliver in 1983 attacked this medicalised model by separating the physical issue of impairment from the social construct of disability; going on to cast the latter as the explicit and implicit exclusion of people with impairments.[58] It follows therefore that when considering sensory impairment, we should be clear that physical impairment of eyes and ears is one thing (and to traditional social modellists, not a suitable subject for public discussion), while

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[58] Michael Oliver, *Social Work with Disabled People* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

the social exclusion of those with such impairments is another (and to social modellists, an issue to be identified and addressed by changing the way society operates). This would seem to suggest that it is indeed disablist to confuse the two by suggesting that there is an alteration to the deafblind person's mind which is caused by the specific and, in practice, unavoidable social disruptions centred upon their physical impairment.

However, in recent years, such a polar opposition of impairment and disability (and the resulting rigid separation between impairment and social effect) has been challenged. Tom Shakespeare first called for a greater understanding of the 'interactional' relationship between impairment and social effects in *Disability Rights and Wrongs* in 2006, suggesting that 'people are disabled by society *and* by their bodies'.[59] Following a controversial reception, he refined his argument in a revised edition, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited* in 2014:

> The approach to disability that I propose to adopt suggests that disability is always an interaction between individual and structural factors. Rather than getting fixated on defining disability as a deficit or a structural disadvantage or alternatively a product of cultural discourse, a holistic understanding is required.[60]

Shakespeare goes on to contrast his 'interactional' approach with both the social model and the medical model of disability:

> The difference between my approach and the social model is that while I acknowledge the importance of environments and contexts, including discrimination and prejudice, I do not simply define disability as the external disabling barriers or oppression. […] The problems associated with disability cannot be entirely eliminated by any imaginable form of social arrangements […]. The priority for a progressive disability politics is to engage with impairment, not to ignore it.
>     The difference between my approach and what social creationists would describe as the medical model is that I do not explain disability as impairment, and I do not see impairment as determining. My approach is non-reductionist, because I accept that limitations are always experienced as an inter-play of impairment with particular contexts and environments. Impairment is a necessary but not sufficient factor in the complex interplay of issues that results in disability.[61]

It is, therefore, within this 'interactional' framework that my investigation is grounded. As Shakespeare acknowledges, Thomas has also described a more complex relation between impairment and disability. She coins the term

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[59] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.2.
[60] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited,* p. 75.
[61] Ibid, p. 75.

'impairment effects' to describe the 'bio-social' issues resulting from impairment, which result in their own disabling effects.[62] These effects are real, and important, and exist apart from the social exclusion issues that the social model presents. In illustration of this point, Thomas uses the example of a woman with a missing hand: 'Delving beneath the surface soon demonstrates that the biological/social dualism cannot be sustained.'[63] Thomas explains that the impairment (a missing hand) and its effects (e.g. inability to pour water from a kettle into a hand-held container) are simultaneously embodied (the absent hand limiting manual activity) and socially contingent (Western society is set up such that pouring water from a kettle is a necessary everyday activity). Such 'bio-social phenomena' may then become 'the substratum or medium for disablism' (for example if the woman is excluded from employment in the care industry because she cannot carry out the water-pouring function), and may also have psychological effects, such as loss of self-esteem.[64] However, identifying the phenomena is not disablist and the concomitant effects are real.

These effects do not slot neatly into the social model's construction of disability. As Shakespeare points out: 'the social model does not define disability as the socio-cultural experience of impairment. Instead, disability is defined as oppression'.[65] Nevertheless, I would argue that to investigate the sociocultural experience of people with impairments is not to question the fact of this oppression, nor even necessarily to attack such a definition of disability. Whether such experiences would or would not exist in a world free of social barriers is a separate issue. That world does not (and may never) exist. As Linton points out:

> One research domain that is yet to be fully explored from the perspectives of disabled people is the kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, sensory and cognitive experiences of people with an array of impairments. […] Given that […] the experience of someone who is blind or deaf […] has been underrepresented across the disciplines, we are missing the constructs and theoretical material needed to articulate the ways in which impairment shapes disabled people's version of the world.[66]

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[62] Carol Thomas, *Female Forms. Experiencing and Understanding Disability* (Philadelphia: Open University Press. 1999).

[63] Carol Thomas, *Sociologies of Disability and Illness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 27.

[64] Thomas, *Sociologies,* p. 27.

[65] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs,* p. 57.

[66] Simi Linton, 'Disability Studies/Not Disability Studies', *Disability & Society*, 13, 4 (1998), 525–39, p. 530.

Thomas herself declares that in providing concrete examples to illustrate her ideas of biosocial phenomena, she has given more attention to physical impairments than sensory ones (or learning difficulties, or mental health).[67] I am therefore extending her work by applying her theory of biosocial impairment effects to the experience of sensory impairment; and, in so doing, I am answering Linton's call to explore this domain. I believe that by extending Thomas's work in this way, an analogous pattern of interactivity can be uncovered. The disruption to communication and mutual understanding that is a corollary of dual sensory impairment is a biosocial phenomenon, which has its own real and significant effects. My next challenge is to identify some of these.

## A.6 Multiple Drafts: editorial revisions and sensory impairment

Although a contentious writer (one commentator describes him as 'ever the gadfly'),[68] Daniel Dennett follows a line of enquiry that will illuminate my investigation here. He examines consciousness from the perspective of the 'extruded self'; the individual in constant interaction with their social environment:

> Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee, and conspecifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spiderwebs into self-protective strings of narrative. Indeed […] when we let in these words, these meme-vehicles, they tend to take over, creating *us*, out of the raw materials they find in our brains.[69]

This has particular value when discussing the experience of the sensory impaired, because, as I have shown, a significant part of what is 'different' about that experience is produced by the interaction with the social environment, which is itself constructed by the normative mores of the unimpaired people all around. Dennett briefly alludes to the 'terribly stunted' minds of those 'deaf-mutes' (by which he means the prelingually deaf) who have been denied any access to language.[70] Helen Keller, growing to the age of almost seven without more than rudimentary gestures to convey her needs to others, and unable to see or hear their responses, found the limitation unbearable:

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[67] Thomas, *Sociologies*, p. 9.
[68] Owen J. Flanagan, 'The Robot Phenomenology of the Stream of Consciousness', in Block, Flanagan and Güzeldere, pp. 89–94, p. 89.
[69] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 417.
[70] Ibid, p. 448.

> The few signs I used became less and less adequate, and my failures to make myself understood were invariably followed by outbursts of passion. I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made frantic attempts to free myself. I struggled — not that struggling helped matters, but the spirit of resistance was strong within me. I generally broke down in tears and physical exhaustion. If my mother happened to be near I crept into her arms, too miserable even to remember the cause of the tempest. After a while, the need of some means of communication became so urgent that these outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly.[71]

This languageless state of incommunication was 'a sort of perpetual dream', which Keller remembers only in the blurred and vague fragments that most of us have of our much younger pre-language selves.[72] From this, she describes her introduction to deafblind manual language as 'being restored to my human heritage'.[73] Language, any language, whether spoken, seen or felt, provides the route to creating selfhood that Dennett maps out. Through 'telling stories, and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others — and ourselves — about who we are', we accomplish our 'most fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control and self-definition'.[74] It is this facility, Dennett concludes, that produces our sense of phenomenal consciousness, of selfhood *per se*:

> These strings or streams of narrative issue forth as if from a single source — not just in the obvious physical sense of flowing from just one mouth, or one pencil or pen, but in a more subtle sense: their effect on any audience is to encourage them to (try to) posit a unified agent whose words they are, about whom they are: in short, to posit a *center of narrative gravity.* Like the biological self, this psychological or narrative self is yet another abstraction, not a thing in the brain, but still a remarkably robust and almost tangible attractor of properties, the 'owner of record' of whatever items and features are lying about unclaimed.[75]

Language; the tool by which we communicate with others and ourselves, leads to the delusion of a unified inner self. This is the 'center of narrative gravity' that feels so innate and intuitive. Its assumed existence as a real entity, physical or spiritual, is the 'Cartesian Theater' mode of thinking about our minds that Dennett has painstakingly dismantled. In opposition to this fundamental error, as he sees it, Dennett has defined what one commentator describes as a powerful

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[71] *The Story of My Life*, p. 14.
[72] 'The World I Live In*'*, p. 67.
[73] *The Story of My Life*, p. 13.
[74] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 418.
[75] Ibid, p. 418.

alternative metaphor 'that may help one avoid sliding back into the ingrained confusion'.[76] This alternative metaphor is the 'Multiple Drafts' model:

> According to the Multiple Drafts model, all varieties of perception — indeed, all varieties of thought or mental activity — are accomplished in the brain by parallel, multitrack processes of interpretation and elaboration of sensory inputs. Information entering the nervous system is under continuous 'editorial revision'. These editorial processes occur over large fractions of a second, during which time various additions, incorporations, emendations, and overwritings of content can occur, in various orders. We don't directly experience what happens on our retinas, in our ears, on the surface of our skin. What we actually experience is a product of many processes of interpretation — editorial processes, in effect. They take in relatively raw and one-sided representations, and yield collated, revised, enhanced representations, and they take place in the streams of activity occurring in various parts of the brain.[77]

Thus far, the model is not controversial; Dennett himself acknowledges that 'this is recognised by nearly all theories of perception'.[78] It accords with Farah's neurobiological account of visual processing: 'Vision involves a surprising degree of division of labor, by which a seemingly unitary function is carried out by multiple specialized systems that operate in parallel.'[79] Nevertheless, the constant editorial revisions involved in this 'Multiple Drafts' model are of particular relevance to the experience of the sensory impaired. I have already described, through my example of the fictional encounter on a beach, the misinterpretations and misunderstandings that accompany the deafblind person's social interactions. It is through the specialised interaction of language that such miscommunications may be clarified for the individuals concerned. Language operates as a feedback loop, revealing the difference between impaired and non-impaired perceptions. To return to our fictional beach encounter: a third (unimpaired) person might question the impaired person, 'Why didn't you wave back to that man passing us on the beach?' 'What man? There wasn't any man.' 'Didn't you see him? He was right in front of you. You were looking straight at him.' As a result, the impaired person learns that the initial impression, based on limited sensory input, was not the only story (although it

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[76] Eyal M. Reingold, 'Conscious Versus Unconscious Processes, Are They Qualitatively Different?', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences,* 15, 2 (Jun. 1992), 219–20, p. 219.
[77] Daniel C. Dennett, 'The Cartesian Theater and "Filling In" the Stream of Consciousness', in Block, Flanagan and Güzeldere, pp. 83–88, p. 83.
[78] Ibid, p. 83.
[79] Martha J. Farah, *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Vision* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 3.

may retain its emotional impact). A new draft of the encounter is written into consciousness.

The uniquely sophisticated and complex faculty of language enables this redrafting. Dennett posits that the acquisition of language, for humankind as a species, and for each of us as an individual, is a momentous event that rewires the brain, allowing us to acquire consciousness itself.[80] He contrasts this with an example of the individual wildebeest in a herd of wildebeest, which does not compare and contrast its experience with its fellows in the way that we can: 'We human beings share a subjective world — and know that we do — in a way that is entirely beyond the capacities of any other creatures on the planet, because we can talk to one another.'[81] I argue that through repeated language-based experiences of the kind I have described, the sensory impaired person learns not to fully trust the apparent *prima facie* evidence of their senses, and to build in the ever-present option of a situation being other than it seems; an adjustable reality. As evidence comes in from others through the medium of language, the impaired person adds further 'drafts' to their own individual understanding; ones that approximate more closely the shared subjective world that Dennett describes. It is a world that Helen Keller recognised, and characterised as the seeing-hearing world, which language both enabled and constrained her to join:

> The experience of the deaf-blind person, in a world of seeing, hearing people, is like that of a sailor on an island where the inhabitants speak a language unknown to him, whose life is unlike that he has lived. He is one, they are many; there is no chance of compromise. He must learn to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears, to think their thoughts, to follow their ideals.[82]

Of course, some sensory impaired people will not be in such a minority position. Harlan Lane describes how those 'who grew up deaf as part of the deaf community […] see themselves as fundamentally visual people with their own visual language, social organization, history and more — in short with their own way of being, their own language and culture'.[83] Often capitalised as Deaf to distinguish its cultural distinctness from those who are merely physically deaf, this Deaf community, many of whose members strongly reject the label of disability and see themselves instead as a linguistic minority, has a full language

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[80] Dennett, *Kinds of Minds,* pp. 147–48.
[81] Ibid, p. 9.
**[82]** *The World I Live In*, pp. 52–53.
[83] Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (New York: Knopf, 1992), p. 5.

to share experience and find mutual self-definition.[84] Thus a Deaf person living in a Deaf community, using Sign, and aware of the shared history and culture, would not suffer such exclusion. It is produced in a politically constructed social context. And, as Nora Ellen Groce's fascinating anthropological study of the community in Martha's Vineyard shows, exclusion does not need to be inevitable in a hearing-majority society. Settlers arriving at this island off the New England coast in the seventeenth century brought a recessive gene for deafness that proliferated through inbreeding over the following generations, until twentieth-century economic decline and off-island education broke up the community. Interviewing remaining islanders, Groce found that the deaf Vineyarders had been so fully integrated into island society that 'they certainly were not considered to be handicapped'.[85] Indeed, deafness was so little a defining characteristic that Groce's interviewees had to be prompted to distinguish which of their friends and neighbours had been deaf. The reason for this was that hearing people and deaf people alike used the Island sign language to the extent that hearing people often used it even when no deaf person was present. This unimpeded communication 'eliminated the wall that separates most deaf people from the rest of society'.[86]

However, neither of these communities represents the typical situation: most sensory impaired people are forced to define themselves in reference to an unimpaired majority. A dual sensory impaired person is particularly likely to have to do so, by virtue of their difference not only from unimpaired people but also from those who are solely hearing or sight impaired. Further still, Roderick J. MacDonald has pointed out that 'the isolation of deafblind people from each other' is the major factor hindering the development of a unique deafblind culture, even though 'certain behaviors, customs and ideas are unique to deaf-

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[84] For a discussion of Deaf/deaf identities and community, see Bernice Wolf and Paddy Ladd, 'Deaf Communities', in *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language and Education*, ed. by Marc Marschark and Patricia Elizabeth Spencer, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), I, pp 151–63. Also, Carol A. Padden and Tom L. Humphries, *Inside Deaf Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Also Harlan L. Lane, 'Do Deaf People Have a Disability?'*, Sign Language Studies*, 2, 4 (Summer 2002), 356–79.
[85] Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 4.
[86] Ibid, p. 4.

blind people'.[87] MacDonald describes some of these: the need for appropriate touch as part of social contact; an inability to participate in group conversation; a dependence upon interpreters; different etiquette for table manners and social mingling; and the need to clearly identify oneself at the start of every conversation.[88] Most interestingly, he suggests that, given the opportunity of 'continuous' interaction, deafblind people would develop a manual language beyond the existing forms (which comprise either tactile finger-spelling of a spoken language or hands-on Signing that allows the user to feel the movements of a Sign user): 'While this tactile language would have its roots in spoken and signed languages, it would gradually develop the unique grammar and syntax typical of independent languages.'[89] Without such a language, fitted to the natural deafblind modality of touch, MacDonald's hope that a distinct deafblind community will emerge is unlikely. Thus, those of us with dual sensory impairments will remain in the dislocated position of constructing our constantly revised meanings within the uncompromising shared-subjective world of those whose experience is quite different to our own.

It is important to acknowledge that Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model is far from being scientifically proven. Indeed, for reasons I shall come on to discuss, elements of it are highly controversial. However, it is a revealing lens through which to view the sensation of consciousness for the sensory impaired. As Dennett says, and as Chapter 1 of this thesis showed: 'metaphors are not "just" metaphors; metaphors are the tools of thought'.[90] Now I wish to magnify the picture this lens reveals, and take Dennett's theory a step further by suggesting that the deafblind person's 'multiple drafts' have an important difference from those of the unimpaired. In Dennett's model, one draft replaces another. Reality is continually shifting, but, at any one moment, only one version of reality seems to exist for the mind's 'owner'. In the case of the deafblind person, many versions consciously coexist. When you act coldly towards me because of our previous miscommunication, I have learned to hold multiple interpretations of the situation

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[87] Roderick J. MacDonald, 'Deaf-Blindness: An Emerging Culture?', *The Deaf Way: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1994), pp. 496–503, pp. 499–500.
[88] Deafblind himself and founder of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind, MacDonald has good claim to speak with authority. Caution is still required: some of his statements are sweeping and do not necessarily encompass the preferences of all deafblind people.
[89] MacDonald, p. 503.
[90] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained,* p. 455.

at the ready. One may be based on my own sensory information (I am meeting you for the first time and you are being unfriendly), but others will consider potential missing information to explain the situation (you are someone I've met before but am failing to recognise; or you might be offended by some behaviour of mine; or perhaps you are not annoyed but distracted by some noise or event currently taking place that I have not perceived). Crucially, these multiple drafts are not consecutive but contemporaneous. They coexist in my mind, not only as logical possibilities, but as qualitative 'seemings', and though I may waver towards giving more weight to one or another as further evidence comes in, this will be without absolutely confirming or discarding any.

### A.7 Multiple *and* contemporaneous: the path from Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model to my 'Provisionality Principle'

The root of the 'Multiple Drafts' model is its refutation of a definable moment of perception that arrives somewhere in the consciousness unmediated by mental interpretation. In a co-paper, Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne arrive at this bold hypothesis through analysing the implications of four scientific experiments that reveal temporal anomalies in our subjective experience. I will summarise the first of these. Two small spots, close together and different in colour (for example one red, one green), are lit in rapid succession. The observer, however, reports seeing a single spot that moves and changes colour (for example from red to green) midway. This is known as the colour *phi* phenomenon. But how can the observer 'see' the motion or the change in colour '*before that second flash occurs*'?[91] In their different ways, the other experiments also lead to the same, seemingly illogical conclusion:

> In each example an apparent dislocation in time threatens the *prima facie* plausible thesis that our conscious perceptions are caused by events in our nervous systems, and our conscious acts, in turn, cause events in our nervous systems that control our bodily acts. To first appearances, the anomalous phenomena show that these two standard causal links cannot be sustained unless we abandon a foundational — some would say a logically necessary — principle: *Causes precede their effects*.[92]

Dennett and Kinsbourne pinpoint the source of the anomaly as a mismatch between the 'objective processing stream' — the actual order of events in the outside world — and the 'subject's subjective sequence as indicated by what the

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[91] Dennett and Kinsbourne, 'Time and the Observer', p. 186.
[92] Ibid, p. 187.

subject subsequently says'.[93] The subject has made a revisionist judgement that changes the seeming order of events. Dennett and Kinsbourne suggest two alternative mechanisms by which this could happen, and distinguish them with attention-grabbing names; 'Stalinesque' and 'Orwellian', to characterise their different modes of revisionism:

1. Stalinesque falsification. In the brain's editing room, located before consciousness, there is a brief delay that allows alterations before a perception reaches consciousness. The image of the red spot arrives in the editing room, closely followed by another image of the green spot. At this point, interstitial images of the spots are created and spliced in between the true images: 'By the time the "finished product" arrives at consciousness, it already has its illusory insertion.'[94] Dennett and Kinsbourne dub this pre-experiential method of revision 'Stalinesque', because it mirrors the falsification of historical records that went on in the Stalin era, via staged 'show trials'. At these, 'carefully scripted presentations of false testimony and bogus confessions, complete with simulated evidence' were presented, creating a documented account of a past that never happened.[95]

2. Orwellian rewriting. Shortly after conscious awareness of both, separate, spots (with no illusion of motion), a 'revisionist historian of sorts, in the brain's memory-library receiving station' notices that red-followed-by-green doesn't make enough sense, and speedily inserts into the memory library the interstitial frames that re-interpret the event as a single spot in motion.[96] In the fraction of a second that this takes, your memory becomes contaminated: 'You say and believe that you saw the illusory motion and color change, but that is really a memory hallucination, not an accurate recollection of your original awareness.'[97] Dennett and Kinsbourne call this post-experiential revision of memory 'Orwellian': 'recalling George Orwell's chilling vision of the Ministry of Truth in *1984*, which busily rewrote history and thus denied access to the (real) past to all who followed.'[98]

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[93] Ibid, p. 190.
[94] Ibid, p. 192.
[95] Ibid, p. 191.
[96] Ibid, p. 192.
[97] Ibid, p. 192.
[98] George Orwell, *1984* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1949).

But which has happened in the colour *phi* example? 'To put it loosely, in these cases is your memory playing tricks with you or are just your eyes playing tricks with you? You can't tell "from the inside."'[99] Either way, it ends up 'seeming' to you as if you saw a red spot set off from one side and change colour to green at the mid-point, then continue to the other side. In the Orwellian case, for a split second there must have been an initial accurate awareness of two separate, sequential, motionless, differently coloured spots, which was then overwritten creating a false memory of a single, moving, colour-changing spot. In the Stalinesque case, the contamination occurred before there was any conscious awareness of the separate spots. Instead, you are accurately remembering an invented perception (a 'staged show trial'). The model of Cartesian materialism hangs on the difference between the two, say Dennett and Kinsbourne. Identifying which content (two separate, differently coloured spots or one moving, colour-changing spot) 'crossed the finish first' from editing room to theatre of consciousness would reveal which type of revision — Orwellian or Stalinesque — had occurred.[100] It is in that finely grained moment, that 'Great Divide', that point in time/space between pre-experiential and post-experiential revision that Cartesian materialist consciousness manifests itself. But, say Dennett and Kinsbourne, identifying such a moment between pre-consciousness and post-consciousness is not possible: 'This is a difference that makes no difference.'[101] The illusory difference between Orwellian and Stalinesque revision is purely verbal — a construct of the Cartesian Theater metaphor that we persistently use to imagine the mind. To settle on 'some moment of processing in the brain' as the 'moment of consciousness' is, Dennett and Kinsbourne say, entirely arbitrary:

> One can always 'draw a line' in the stream of processing in the brain, but there are no functional differences that could motivate declaring all prior stages and revisions unconscious or preconscious adjustments and all subsequent emendations to the content (as revealed by recollection) to be post-experiential memory-contamination. The distinction lapses at close quarters.[102]

In opposition to this arbitrary threshold of consciousness, the 'Multiple Drafts' model postulates a state of nonstop, whole-brain, interpretative flux. One perception-interpretation of an event (or of an element of an event) is constantly

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[99] Dennett and Kinsbourne, 'Time and the Observer', p. 193.
[100] Ibid, p. 192.
[101] Ibid, p. 194.
[102] Ibid, p. 194.

being replaced by another, and the brain adjusts to this new interpretation. Hence, there is no actual 'filling in' of interstitial red and green spots, no Orwellian alteration or Stalinesque falsification of perceptual records. There is no need: 'for no-one is looking'.[103] There is no inner cinema screen to project upon. Instead, the brain adjusts to the new interpretation of events, creating a *judgment* that there was motion and change of colour. Our consciousness is a series of perceptual judgments, not a series of perceptions: 'We perceive — and remember — perceptual events, not a successively analyzed trickle of perceptual elements or attributes locked into succession as if pinned into place on a continuous film.'[104]

Despite the way it feels to most of us, perception is not a simple or objective pre-cognitive activity: it is a process during which the brain must make many judgments at many points, abandoning previous interpretations and adding new ones. We confer upon the moment-by-moment results the mistaken impression of a fundamental, actual, perceptual experience to which we can refer. The adjustments that a sensory impaired person must constantly make cause an important difference to this rewriting process. I suggest that the continual repetitive realisation of error in our perceptual judgments and the need to reformulate them, combined with the gradually-acquired knowledge (via language) that this is not the usual course of events for other people, makes each passing impression more tentative for the deafblind person than it is for the unimpaired person. Eventually, a foregrounded awareness of the *possibility* of change becomes embedded in the process. To give a minor example: when I misplace my keys, I may hunt for them around the table where I usually leave them, without success. The unimpaired person in this situation concludes the keys are not there. I know that despite 'seeming' not to be there, they may in fact be 'right in front of me', disappearing into blind spots in my vision as I scan. That uncertainty is an integral part of the original 'seeming': I am aware of the provisional status of my perception. Nothing is ever definitively missing, or definitively found — the keys I put in my pocket sometimes turn out not to be mine, and my surprise when this happens is minimal. Every 'seeming' within my consciousness is underpinned by this awareness of provisionality.

This 'awareness of provisionality' is the crucial stage in my argument. To it, I will apply the concept of neural 'overlearning' as used by Crick and Koch in

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[103] Ibid, p. 194.
[104] Ibid, p. 200.

their study of the correlation of consciousness and particular neuronal processes. Their hypothesis falls into the type which Farah categorises as 'integration accounts', and which Dennett decries as implicitly Cartesian in nature: that visual 'awareness' can be equated with the physical 'binding together' of different, separately represented visual properties of a stimulus (e.g. colour, shape, depth and motion) into a single integrated percept. In doing so, they address 'the binding problem' of how sets of neurons in different parts of the brain, across different sensory modalities, can become temporarily active as a unit. They suggest that there are different types of binding: including the epigenetically determined (to quickly apprehend representations of evolutionary importance, such as the approach of a predator); and the 'overlearned' by frequent repetition (such as recognising letters of the alphabet). Without wishing to step beyond my depth in the waters of neurobiology, I suggest that it is not impossible for the constant foregrounding of the provisionality of perception and judgment to become such an 'overlearned' feature of awareness. Although he disagrees with Crick and Koch's concept of a binding problem *per se*,[105] Dennett has described how such 'overlearned' features can be unconsciously executed, whereas more difficult tasks require reshaping through language for us to accomplish:

> Simple or overlearned tasks without serious competition can be routinely executed without the enlistment of extra forces, and hence unconsciously, but when a task is difficult or unpleasant, it requires 'concentration', something 'we' accomplish with the help of much self-admonition and various other mnemonic tricks, rehearsals (Margolis, 1989) and other self-manipulations (Norman and Shallice, 1985) Often we find it helps to talk out loud, a throwback to the crude but effective strategies of which our private thoughts are sleek descendants. Such strategies of self-control permit us to govern our own perceptual processes in ways that open up new opportunities.[106]

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[105] Dennett warns against 'incautious formulations' of the binding problem which 'often presuppose that there must be some single representational space in the brain (smaller than the whole brain) where the results of all the various discriminations are put into registration with each other […] . There are some careful formulations of the binding problem(s) that avoid this error, but the niceties often get overlooked.' (*Consciousness Explained*, pp. 257–58.)

[106] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 277. Dennett refers to Howard Margolis, *Patterns, Thinking and Cognition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), and D. A. Norman and T. Shallice, *Attention to Action: Willed and Automatic Control of Behavior,* Center for Human Information Processing, 1985 (Technical Report no. 99), repr. with revisions in R. J. Davidson, G. E. Schwartz, and D. Shapiro, eds (New York: Plenum Press, 1986).

I suggest, therefore, that for the deafblind person a foregrounded awareness of the multiplicity of judgments taking place in our brains becomes routine, an inherent feature of perception. For the unimpaired, it may be more difficult; a task that requires concentration and strategies of self-control. As with Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model, I am not proffering this as a scientifically demonstrable fact, but as a tool that helps to identify and explain the experience of sensory impairment. As noted earlier, for the sake of conciseness I shall refer to this constant awareness of the possibility of alternative readings of any situation as the 'Provisionality Principle'. This has fundamental and far-reaching implications. If the impaired person is constantly aware of the provisional nature of their 'seemings' and of the existence of other 'drafts' of the situation; then their ways of acting within situations, and of dealing with new information will be affected. The next section explores this further.

## A.8 Provisionality effects: 'what is it like' to be sensory impaired?

By now, I hope that I have achieved my aim, stated at the end of section A.2.4, of rejecting Nagel's hypothesis of the inaccessibility of the deafblind mind. In its place, I have embarked upon a response to Dennett's question of what actual structural differences might be contained therein. Here, I pause to incorporate P. M. S. Hacker's excoriating attack on the 'knotted tangle of misconceptions' woven into the debate on consciousness, and his dissection of Nagel's formulation in particular.[107] Through a historical analysis of the varying shades of meaning of the word 'consciousness', and a logical unravelling of the assumptions within these, Hacker determines that there is a fundamental misperception in Nagel's influential proposal that phenomenal consciousness is distinguished by there being 'something that it is like to be':[108]

> Smelling lilac may be just as pleasant as smelling roses, but the experiences differ despite sharing the same qualitative character. What distinguishes the experiences is not what it feels like to have them, but what they are experiences *of*. A persistent mistake among defenders of *qualia* is to confuse and conflate the qualities of what one experiences (e.g. the colour of the violets, the scent of the roses, the taste of the

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[107] P. M. S. Hacker, 'The Sad and Sorry History of Consciousness: Being, Among Other Things, a Challenge to the Consciousness Studies Community', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement,* 70 (2012), 149–68.
[108] Nagel, p. 438.

apple) with the qualities of the experience (delightful, enjoyable, pleasant, revolting). *A perceptible quality is not a quality of a perception.*[109]

Unpicking the grammatical elisions, Hacker investigates Nagel's claim that when he questions 'what it is like to be', he 'does not mean: "what (in our experience) it *resembles,*" but rather "how it is for the subject himself"'.[110] Hacker's premise is that Nagel hereby sets up an illicit question; one that its own grammatical terms do not permit. The 'relative unfamiliarity' of the phrase 'something that it is like to be' numbs us to 'an unrecognized misuse of the interrogative phrase "what it is like."'[111] I shall attempt an illustration using a series of examples based on Hacker's own. Imagine the following conversational exchange:

> 'What was it like for you to smell the violets?'

> 'To smell the violets was wonderful.'

Note that the 'like' in the question is dropped in the response. As Hacker points out, unless we are illiterate, we do not say 'to smell the violets was like wonderful'.[112] We cannot derive from the question 'what was it like?' the generalised formulation that 'there is something which it was like to smell the violets, namely wonderful' and even to attempt this is:

> a miscegenous crossing of the existential generalization of a judgement of similarity with an existential generalization of the affective character of an experience. The result is latent nonsense — which has now been rendered patent.[113]

Instead, we must say 'there is something that it *is* to smell the violets, namely wonderful'. Thus, Hacker deduces, we can ask 'what is it like to be a doctor?' and expect to receive in answer 'a description of the role, hardships and satisfactions, typical experiences and episodes in the life of a doctor', but it is quite mistaken to turn this around and say that 'there is something that it is like' to be a doctor.[114] The 'what is it like?' question demands a contrastive element, even if this is implicit within the context rather than explicitly stated. So, when we ask someone 'what is it like to be a doctor?' we may implicitly be asking 'what is it like to be a doctor (as opposed to being an engineer or a farmer)?' Or, 'what is it like (for a woman as opposed to a man) to be a doctor?' Or, 'what is it like (for you personally as opposed to anyone else) to be a doctor?' And so on. But it

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[109] Hacker, p. 165.
[110] Nagel, p. 440 (footnote).
[111] Hacker, p. 162.
[112] Hacker, p. 165.
[113] Ibid, p. 165–66.
[114] Ibid, p. 167.

makes no sense to suggest that the question means 'what is it like (for a doctor) to be a doctor' yet that is the form of words so influentially offered by Nagel. Therefore, argues Hacker, there is not 'something it is like' to be a bat, only what a bat's various perceptions are like, or what a bat's life is like, which 'any decent zoologist who studies bats can readily tell us'.[115] He applies the same reasoning to human experience:

> It is even more glaringly obvious that the supposition that there is something it is like for me to be me is sheer nonsense, for it is logically impossible (there is no such thing) for me to be anyone other than myself. Not only do I not know what it is like for me to be me — there is nothing to know. I do not know what it is like for me to be a human being either — for this is a form of words without any sense. It is not as if I might have been a cat or a dog, or a ink-jet printer. But I can, of course, tell you what my life has been like.[116]

Building on Hacker's logic, when I ask in this section heading 'what is it like to be sensory impaired', I do not mean that there is a Nagelian 'something that it is like' to be deaf or blind. Indeed, I would suggest that interpreting the question this way is a path to the sweeping metaphorical conferral of meaning that was exposed in Chapter 1. There is not an overarching 'something' (tragedy/helplessness/purification/evil) that it is like to be blind or deaf. Rather, as with the question 'what is it like to be a doctor', the question demands an implicit contrast. My line of argument has been to investigate the implications of Dennett's body-based mind rewired by the use of language within the social environment: the biosocial phenomena of sensory impairment. This allows the question to be expanded for explicitness thus: What is it like (for a person surrounded by unimpaired people) to be sensory impaired (as opposed to having no such impairment)?

To formulate my response more fully, I must return to the fundamentally controversial aspect of Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model: 'there are no facts about the stream of consciousness independent of particular probes':[117]

> These distributed content-discriminations yield, over the course of time, something rather like a narrative stream or sequence, which can be thought of as subject to continual editing by many processes distributed around in the brain, and continuing indefinitely into the future. This stream of contents is only rather like a narrative because of its multiplicity; at any point in time there are multiple 'drafts' of narrative fragments at various stages of editing in various places in the brain.

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[115] Ibid, p. 168.
[116] Ibid, p. 168.
[117] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 138.

> Probing this stream at different places and times produces different effects, precipitates different narratives from the subject.[118]

Dennett specifically links his usage of the phrase 'stream of consciousness' with the modernist literary understanding of the term. He describes the difference between early conceptual models of computer architecture (the Neumann or Turing machines) and human brains as the difference between sequential (one step at a time) and parallel (multiple drafts) processing, and uses this as an analogy for the difference between the working of our conceptualised 'minds' and our physical brains:

> These fascinating new von Neumann machines were called 'giant electronic brains,' but they were, in fact, *giant electronic minds*, electronic imitations — severe simplifications — of what William James dubbed the stream of consciousness, the meandering sequence of conscious mental contents famously depicted by James Joyce in his novels. The architecture of the brain, by contrast, is massively parallel, with millions of simultaneous active channels of operation. What we have to understand is how a Joycean (or, as I have said, 'von Neumannesque') serial phenomenon can come to exist, with all its familiar peculiarities, in the parallel hubbub of the brain.[119]

The illusion of a unified 'mind', or 'Joycean machine' as Dennett dubs it, within our brain is, he suggests, the result of our brain becoming 'the object of its own elaborate perceptual systems'.[120] It is a rationalisation, like the colour *phi* phenomenon discussed earlier. We 'fill in the gaps' by making a judgment to interpret the two separate, stationary flashes as a single, moving dot that changes colour midway. So also, as our thoughts intermittently probe the constant multiplicity of activity taking place in our brains, do we 'fill in the gaps' between different drafts of perceptual judgments to create an apparently unified, and therefore meaningful, progression — a narrative flow of 'consciousness'.

Woolf famously characterised Joyce's practice in terms of an exhortation to other writers to take up his approach: 'Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.'[121] As Naremore notes, this much-quoted exhortation has sometimes mistakenly been read as a 'manifesto' for Woolf's own writing

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[118] Dennett, 'The Cartesian Theater', p. 84.
[119] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 214.
[120] Ibid, p. 225.
[121] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', p. 150.

method when in fact she mislikes Joyce's intention and is railing against it.[122] Her reasons are ones that Dennett should approve since they approach an encapsulation of his model of erroneous thinking; the 'Cartesian Theater'. For Woolf, as pointed out in section 2.4.2, Joyce's method is 'centred in a self which, in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond'.[123] She strongly objects to this 'damned egotistical self', finding it so intrusive that it 'ruins' Joyce's writing for her.[124] Nevertheless, the alternative may be a frightening prospect. Commenting on Dennett and Kinsbourne's explanation of the 'Multiple Drafts' model, Drew McDermott has suggested that the 'dethroning of the self' is hard for most to accept because it offers an unsettling conclusion: 'the examined life is not worth living', and without the self 'what else is there to care about?'[125] What might a world with no unified human selves mean for ethics and morality? McDermott's answer is part rueful, part warning: 'Perhaps the consequences of believing Dennett & Kinsbourne's theory are so awful that even if it is true we should suppress it.'[126] Nevertheless, as I shall show, it is here in its most disturbing and dangerous aspect that the 'Multiple Drafts' model becomes most useful for examining the deafblind experience.

Dennett sets up an electronic publishing analogy involving multiple, coexisting drafts of an academic article, all of which are being read and commented on by colleagues so that it becomes arbitrary if not impossible to choose any one version as the 'final draft'.[127] Using this analogy of 'literary creation' (as Lodge has termed it),[128] Dennett suggests that not merely perception but also timing, accident and circumstance play a part in arbitrarily

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[122] Naremore, p. 122. The misunderstanding continues to abound, for example by Theresa Prudente, '"The Damned Egotistical Self"; Self and Impersonality in Virginia Woolf's and James Joyce's Writing', in *Joyce in Progress: Proceedings of the 2008 James Joyce Graduate Conference in Rome,* ed. by Franca Ruggieri, John McCourt and Enrico Terrinoni, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009) pp. 186–94, p. 187. Also see Jin Ma, 'James Joyce's Epiphany and Virginia Woolf's "Moment of Importance"', *Studies in Literature and Language,* 2, 1 (2011), pp. 114–18, p. 115.

[123] Woolf, *The Common Reader*, p. 151.

[124] Anne Olivier Bell, ed, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 2: 1920–1924*, 5 vols (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1981), II, p. 14.

[125] Drew McDermott, 'Little "me"', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 15, 2 (June 1992), pp. 217–18, p. 217.

[126] Ibid, p. 218.

[127] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained,* pp. 125–26.

[128] Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, p. 112.

determining which interpretive draft within our minds is foregrounded at any one moment to produce the current 'how it seems'. As with the drafts of the electronic article, no version is definitive nor authoritatively final. Rather than our consciousness emerging from a coherent narratorial position, we only experience 'something rather like a narrative stream'.[129]

Other commentators underline the link between this and Joyce's stream of consciousness narrative method:

> Ms. Molly Bloom drifts off to sleep, consciously thinking these last thoughts: 'all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.' When Ms. Bloom trades consciousness for sleep, she is trading away a single, unified narrative for none. This is what Joyce believed, this is what we believe, but this isn't what Dennett & Kinsbourne (D & K) believe. Instead, D & K believe that there is no unified stream of consciousness […]. Instead of a single narrative, they want a 'a skein of narratives.'[130]

For Dennett, the seemingly unified narrative that we create out of this skein is one of 'the strangest and most wonderful constructions in the whole animal world' because by this means each member of the *Homo sapiens* species 'makes a *self*':

> Out of its brain it spins a web of words and deeds, and like the other creatures, it doesn't have to know what it's doing, it just does it. This web protects it, just like the snail's shell, and provides it a livelihood, just like the spider's web, and advances its prospects for sex, just like the bowerbird's bower. Unlike a spider, an individual human doesn't just extrude its web; more like a beaver, it works hard to gather the materials out of which it builds its protective fortress. Like a bowerbird, it appropriates many found objects which happen to delight it — or its mate — including many that have been designed by others for other purposes.[131]

Helen Keller, defending herself as an adult against a painful charge of plagiarism that occurred during her childhood, described the power of such 'found objects': 'what I read becomes the very substance and texture of my mind'.[132] Knowing

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[129] Dennett, 'The Cartesian Theater'. p. 84.

[130] J. Aronson, E. Dietrich, and E. Way, 'Throwing the Conscious Baby out with the Cartesian Bathwater', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 15, 2 (June 1992), 202–03, p. 202.

[131] Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, p. 416.

[132] *The Story of My Life*, p. 56. As an eleven-year-old, Keller wrote a story that she believed to be original, but others noticed close similarities with a story previously published by Margaret Canby. Effectively put on trial, she was made to face a panel of adults who cross-questioned her to determine her guilt or innocence in the matter. Later investigation by Anne Sullivan suggested that Canby's book may have been read to Keller in early childhood, although Keller herself retained no conscious memory of this.

more clearly than most of us that she constructed much of her knowledge of the world through the ideas given to her by others (in her case via finger-spelling or Braille typescript), she understood the role that words play in shaping and not just describing our perceptions.

Dennett's position is that although this 'mind' spun from language produces our experience of a Joycean-style narrative stream, nevertheless such a 'consciousness' has no underlying substantive reality. This can be further applied to the deafblind experience, adding perspective to my earlier example of the encounter on the beach. Probing the 'multiple drafts' of perceptual judgment forming in my mind during and after the encounter will produce very different 'seemings' at different moments: I was alone on the beach; someone materialised from nowhere; I was never alone; perhaps I was alone, and perhaps I wasn't; if I wasn't alone, that might account for X's behaviour, and so on. According to Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts' model, one 'seeming' replaces another as the brain rationalises its own activity, weaving together fragments from parallel processes to form an apparently sequential and seamless 'narrative stream'. I suggest, however, that for deafblind people the effect of the 'Provisionality Principle' is to foreground the discontinuities and to heighten the uncertainties, thus interfering with this process of rationalisation. The deafblind person is thereby continually nudged towards an awareness of the arbitrariness of the attempts at a self-imposed narrative, and may thus come instinctively to suspect the 'filling in' process that creates the apparent unity of the experience. Every perceptual judgment becomes a provisional one with a built-in awareness that there are possible alternatives.

The psychological effects will differ widely amongst individuals and contexts, but the important element for this investigation is that this underpinning awareness of provisionality has the potential to make a deafblind person's experience ('what it is like') structurally different from that of the non-impaired. It may be difficult for the non-impaired to appreciate because their very lack of awareness of the way in which their 'reality' is put together makes it hard for them to accept its essential artifice. I suggest that this may explain why so few critics have paid attention to the way in which Henry Green's novel *Caught* evokes the experience of hearing loss. The omission is indicative of a larger gap that crosses disciplinary boundaries: a misleading intuition about the meaningful unity of one's individual subjectivity bars the way to a full, future understanding how consciousness operates. Further, it militates against accepting that for others the experience may be considerably different and that this is neither

defect nor Otherness but a part of the biosocial diversity that characterises normality. In conclusion, I will end the appendix to this thesis in the same way that I began its introduction; with the words of Helen Keller:

> It seems to me that the great difficulty of writing is to make the language of the educated mind express our confused ideas, half-feelings, half-thoughts, when we are little more than bundles of instinctive tendencies. Trying to write is very much like trying to put a Chinese puzzle together. We have a pattern in mind which we wish to work out in words; but the words will not fit the spaces, or, if they do, they will not match the design. But we keep on trying because we know that others have succeeded, and we are not willing to acknowledge defeat.[133]

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[133] Ibid, p. 56.

## Appendix B. Synopsis of *Kindness is a Language*

Born deaf and discovering in her early teens that she is also losing her sight, Ellie Linnet's experience of life is different. But not because of what she doesn't hear or see. Nor even because of the misunderstandings and misperceptions that result. In fact, everyone around her is also caught up in a world of mistakes, confusion and self-deceit. The real difference is that they don't know it. Misled by their powerful belief in the truth of what they hear and see, those closest to Ellie are unaware of how their own distorted judgments impact others. Ellie's journey towards an understanding of her own particular sensory impairments is bound up in this story with her developing insight into the gaps between what we all do, say and think.

Set in Yorkshire and London from 1976 to 1986, *Kindness is a Language* follows Ellie from ages five to fourteen. It begins in the village of Stonethorpe, northwest Yorkshire, when Ellie's Nana collapses and dies, leaving five-year-old Ellie alone in the world. Ellie is taken in by the neighbouring Ray family; a stop-gap situation which becomes long-term. Her severe deafness is difficult for the Rays to deal with, and they react to her challenging behaviour in various ways: pity, irritation, disregard, underestimation and hostility, which in turn affects Ellie's responses to each of them. Isaac, the youngest of the Rays' three sons, is the same age as Ellie. His dogmatic character means that at first the pair clash, but over time they develop an intense, often embattled, friendship that becomes altogether more complicated as they enter their teenage years.

Mrs Ray, finding Ellie unbearably disruptive, succeeds in tracking down the child's father, Lucian Langhorne, a well-off London professional. He is reluctant to involve himself with this awkward result of a long-ago encounter, but provides money and occasional visits. Much to Isaac's chagrin, Ellie idolises Lucian and forms a glorified idea of him through this limited contact, identifying him with the romanticised father figures in the books that she devours. Fiction offers Ellie an absolute inclusion that life doesn't: she can read every word on a printed page and gather the full meaning, whereas everyday communication via speech is far more patchy and incomplete. Isaac's severe, though unrecognised dyslexia bars him from this escapist world, which bolsters his resentment of Lucian's hold over Ellie.

Lucian himself is dismayed by Ellie's deafness. Accustomed to mocking his tiresome mother, who is growing deaf with age, he is brought up short against some unpleasant realisations. This makes him self-conscious when

dealing with Ellie: behaviour which she interprets as proof of his deep feelings for her, but which cement Isaac's belief that Ellie is making a fool of herself and that Lucian couldn't care less about her.

Two other relationships also impact the growing bond between Ellie and Isaac. The first is the rivalry developing between Isaac's older brothers, stolid, dependable Malachi and careless, charming Jake, over a girl who blows hot and cold on them both: the spiteful but compelling Aileen. Isaac has strong views on this, supporting Malachi against Jake, whose manipulative, opportunist approach to life runs counter to Isaac's own. Ellie, however, pushed by dealing with hearing loss into a process of constantly re-evaluating her understanding of people's motives and actions, wavers to and fro. This causes mounting friction between her and Isaac.

The second influence comes from Mr Pierson, the reclusive caretaker at Ellie's and Isaac's school. An unappealing elderly man, he is also a close neighbour of theirs. Mr Pierson dislikes children and they respond in kind. Drawn in by an embellished account of an encounter that Malachi and Jake witnessed years ago between Mr Pierson and Ellie's then teenage mother, Dawn, Ellie joins them and Aileen in taunting and teasing the old man. That brings her into direct conflict with Isaac, who likens it to the bullying over her deafness that Ellie experienced when starting school. Rejecting any likeness between herself and the old man's painful vulnerability, Ellie is nevertheless ashamed and apologises to Mr Pierson. This goes badly, which feels grossly unfair to her. Mr Pierson seems to dislike her but takes an interest in Isaac, becoming the first to recognise that the boy's reading difficulties are nothing to do with being 'thick', and introducing Isaac to his own hobbies of bird-watching and photography, which his developing cataracts are making harder to do alone. Excluded, Ellie finds out that Mr Pierson had a past relationship with her own Nana and retreats, disgusted, into her imaginary closeness to the fantasised ideal she has made of Lucian.

In London, Lucian has fallen in love, unexpectedly and deeply. Tense and introverted by nature, he finds this plunge terrifying. Jessica is the receptionist to Mr Post, the eye surgeon expensively treating Lucian's mother's macular degeneration. Very pretty, with a transparency of expression that reveals her every emotion, Jessica has an optimistic outlook on life that is quite unlike Lucian's. Early in their relationship, Jessica tells Lucian that she cannot have children, offering him the chance to break off. Overwhelmed by both her

honesty, and the strength of his own feelings, Lucian lays bare his own shortcomings, in particular owning up to Ellie's existence and admitting to Jessica that Ellie's mother, Dawn, was underage, To his astonishment, Jessica accepts all this with sympathy and understanding. They become engaged and Jessica goes with Lucian to meet Ellie, full of good intentions towards this new stepdaughter.

Jessica's sincere kindness wins over Mr and Mrs Ray, and her looks stun both Malachi and Jake, who gauchely vy for her attention. But awkwardness develops when Jessica notices Ellie's hearing aids and is visibly startled. It gives Ellie a painful suspicion that her father may be ashamed of her, but rather than blame him, she holds it against Jessica. When it becomes clear that Lucian has no thought of his daughter attending the imminent wedding, Ellie is deeply hurt. It doesn't help that it is Jessica — not Lucian — who notices this and quicky invites Ellie to spend the upcoming school holiday with them in London after they return from honeymoon. Much as she wants to cast Jessica as the interloper forcing herself between father and daughter, Ellie can't avoid glimpsing that the reality is quite opposite. Nevertheless, she doesn't appreciate Isaac bluntly pointing it out. But Ellie's sullen reaction is eclipsed by Aileen's furious one. Infuriated by Malachi's and Jake's infatuation with Jessica, Aileen makes a scene and reveals that she is pregnant with Jake's baby. This causes consternation to Mr and Mrs Ray, but anguish to Malachi, who didn't know that his brother had secretly succeeded where he had openly failed.

A distraught Malachi later breaks down in front of Ellie and Isaac, telling them how much he loves Aileen and always will. Isaac is bitterly disappointed in his brother for this weakness in the face of such betrayal, but Malachi tells him starkly that this shows he knows nothing about love. Meanwhile, Mr Ray spells out to Jake the need to step up to his new responsibilities and how this is going to drastically change his life. Unlike Malachi, who has left school and is working as a roofer, Jake is taking 'A' levels soon and was going to be the first in the family to go to university — but Mr Ray says this is now out of the question. It becomes apparent that Jake was driven by a competitive urge to win against his brother rather than by any sincere affection for Aileen, and he is now appalled by what lies ahead. Isaac is unsympathetic, believing that Jake is justly reaping what he has sown. Ellie, however, finds it harder to work out what she thinks. To her, the older boys' reactions to Aileen are tangled up with the little she knows about Lucian and her own mother. The rights and wrongs of the situation are grey to her, not black and white as they are to Isaac. Estrangement results.

Isaac takes refuge with the devoted Mr Pierson, who protectively influences him against giving in to Ellie's desperate attempts to make up before leaving for London. None of them, not even the old man himself, are aware how strongly his perspective is coloured by his own previous emotional upset when the toddler Ellie 'selfishly' disrupted his relationship with her Nana.

Left to her own devices, Ellie becomes an accidental confidante to a conflicted Aileen, whose parents are pressuring her to have the baby adopted. Mistakenly sharing this information with Jake, whose flash of delight sparks a physical fight between him and Malachi, Ellie is then blamed by Isaac. When Aileen gives birth prematurely to a profoundly disabled baby, raising the stakes of his responsibility, Jake runs away. Ellie reads attitudes to her own disability into this, and into everyone's else's reactions to the baby.

In London, Ellie feels guilty and dislocated. She channels this alienation into a powerful dislike of Horatia, Lucian's overbearing mother, and is appalled when Lucian tries to convince Horatia to wear her new hearing aid by drawing a parallel with Ellie. Equally, Horatia, projecting her own self-loathing over the physical restrictions of growing old, is equally repelled by Ellie's ungainly clumsiness, casting it as a lack of feminity. Jessica finds Ellie company of her own age in Melanie Post, the daughter of newly-divorced Mr Post: the eye surgeon for whom she used to work before her marriage. This produces discord between Jessica and Lucian, for various reasons, which ultimately refer back to the circumstances of Ellie's conception, and becomes a major issue between them. It also has effects on Ellie, who compares the Posts' relationship with her own and Lucian's.

The most far-reaching result, however, is that Mr Post's professional expertise gives him a different perspective than that of everyone else on aspects of Ellie's behaviour, such as her clumsiness, inability to hit a shuttlecock, hesitation on walking into rooms with different light levels, and so on. This leads to a medical diagnosis that Ellie has a rare genetic condition affecting both her ears and eyes, and that she will eventually go blind. Now every action of Ellie's seems to carry ominous significance: the way she trips over the door lintel, or accidentally knocks a magazine off a shelf. Lucian, Jessica and Horatia treat her differently: taking her arm to cross the road, finding excuses to avoid her going anywhere alone. This infuriates Ellie: after all, nothing has changed about her vision itself, only their view of it. Longing for the familiarity of home, Ellie

telephones the Rays, but, defeated by the difficulty of spoken conversation over the phone, hangs up at the sound of Isaac's voice.

Her relationships with Lucian, Jessica and Horatia all change, as do theirs with each other. Ellie also learns more of the circumstances of her birth, and identifies the ill-advised figure that is inadvertently instrumental in it as Mr Pierson. Escaping from the oppressive solicitude of the adults, she seeks out the company of Melanie Post, who is either unaware of Ellie's diagnosis or too self-regarding to be affected by it. The girls are accosted in the street by Isaac Ray. He has come to ask Ellie to help him find Jake, who is reportedly in London working in a particular bar. The two soon clash. Isaac, vulnerable because his dyslexia makes finding new places difficult, is frustrated at Ellie's apparent unwillingness to help him. Ellie is disappointed because Isaac has not come for her sake, in response to her phone call, as she first thought. But Melanie, attracted to Isaac in spite of, or perhaps because of, his brusqueness towards her, involves herself and arranges things.

Lying to Mr Post and the Langhornes that each is staying with the other, they meet Isaac that night and find the bar. Ellie and Isaac are awkward with each other. Ellie is dressed up and seems like a stranger to Isaac. For her part, she can't find a way to talk to him about her diagnosis. He tells her that Malachi and Aileen are now a couple and Malachi is acting as a dad to Jake's baby. Isaac thinks Malachi is throwing his life away and it's Jake's duty to intervene. Ellie takes a different view, and they fall out. Isaac argues that Mr Pierson agrees with him, but Ellie, thinking of what her father has told her, tells Isaac that she doesn't care what Mr Pierson thinks and if he knew better, neither would he.

The bouncer won't let Isaac into the bar, only the girls, and Ellie can barely cope in the dark, noisy environment. When someone catches hold of her, she thinks that Isaac has found a way in and clings to him, but it is Jake, who believes she is drunk and mockingly kisses her. Isaac, who has finally got inside, sees them and roughly pulls Jake away, causing a scene. Isaac is thrown out and the other three can't find him. Melanie has the keys to her father's consulting rooms (where she and Ellie planned to stay since they can't go back to either Post or Langhorne house until the morning). Once there, Melanie and Jake disappear upstairs, leaving Ellie alone. She feels her way through the darkness to the room where her diagnosis happened, experiencing some of the different viewpoints of all the people involved as she lingers where each stood.

Jake finds her there, having left Melanie asleep upstairs. Sobered by the knowledge of Ellie's diagnosis, he takes the news of Malachi and Aileen's

relationship rather differently than he might otherwise have done. He asks Ellie to do something for him. There are some explicit pictures he took of Aileen that he wants her to destroy when she goes back to Stonethorpe: he doesn't want the responsibility of their potential effect on Malachi. Ellie doesn't think it matters, since Malachi already knows what Jake did, but Jake insists that it is different to *see* it. In the pause that follows, Ellie realises that Jake is uncomfortable because this has raised thoughts of her losing her sight: he wants to shy away from this encumbrance. For the first time, she momentarily enters into Isaac's critical attitude towards Jake.

Walking home, she feels sure that Isaac will be loitering, waiting for her: but he is not. On edge, she is also certain that her father and Jessica must have some idea about last night's events, and reads this into their behaviour. They however, are simply intent on their own purpose: to persuade Ellie to live with them. Finding that Ellie doesn't want to accept an offer she thinks is only made because of her diagnosis, Lucian is frank with her that it this is indeed the cause, but not the full reason. Having attacked the problem from every angle: consulting other doctors, flying abroad to visit research labs, interrogating others in the same position, he has found only one answer: to live life regardless. This has focused his mind, and he wants to be part of Ellie's attempt to do that. Now, Ellie agrees.

Brought back to Stonethorpe to collect her belongings, Ellie says goodbye to Mr and Mrs Ray, Malachi and Aileen, but feels painfully constricted by her sense of how each of them is perceiving her in the new light of her diagnosis. Slipping away, she runs to Mr Pierson's disused shed at the allotments, to find and destroy the photographs Jake has hidden there. She is completely unaware either of passing Isaac and Mr Pierson, or of Isaac following her. His heightened emotions cause him for a split-second to 'see' the photos she is holding as naked pictures of Ellie herself. It triggers associations with what others have suggested about Mr Pierson, even though Isaac has previously rejected such accusations, and in the flash of a moment he links this to Ellie's 'if you knew better' outside the bar. Lifting his head to find Mr Pierson peering through the door, the ordinarily cautious Isaac is tipped into instinctive rage and attacks him, only stopping when Ellie screams. Mr Pierson meekly accepts Isaac's onslaught but fends off Ellie's attempt to help, spitting at her as if she is the attacker. Leaving him, Ellie sets off back to the Rays' house, but to her surprise finds Isaac waiting for her in the woods. It is an intense encounter that

acknowledges both their desire for and the apparent impossibility of mutual understanding. They kiss, and Ellie walks away.

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