

Interested Disinterest:
The Development of the Literature Study Guide

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Abstract

The present doctoral thesis takes as its object the literature study guide for A-level, a genre which has not previously received scholarly attention. The thesis brings out the unexpected ways in which this at first sight insignificant genre expresses a fundamental ‘disciplinary anxiety’. The literature study guide is typically unheeded by literary scholars and educators because its instrumentalism – which seems to follow from external political influence – is at odds with literary values. However, this thesis shows that the study guide not only mirrors the clash between neoliberal and humanist values, but also reflects an analogous conflict *within* the discipline of English literature concerning the institutionalisation of disinterested ideals.

In this thesis, the discussion of the tense dialectic within the study guide – its *interested disinterest* – is conducted in three thematic, but inevitably overlapping, parts. The first considers the study guide’s instrumentalism, viewing it as an expression of what is referred to as the neoliberal ethos, as well as investigating the overly facile conception of literary realism which informs the genre’s plot-driven structure. The second part takes disinterest as its theme, demonstrating the study guide’s membership in that tradition through its kinship with Matthew Arnold’s *A Bible Reading for Schools* (1872). It argues, moreover, that the genre finds further motivation in the demands of practical criticism. The final part explores the diachronic development of the balance between interest and disinterest within the study guide, and argues for a reconfiguration of the concept of disinterest such that it might accommodate a more inclusive, and less conflicted, literary pedagogy.

The study guide provides a space for reflection upon the discipline’s implicit values and intuitions of purpose. It is argued that such a reflection leaves us better equipped to tackle ongoing challenges to the discipline.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all material in this doctoral thesis is original and my own work, except where otherwise identified, and that no material has previously been submitted for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

As work in development, sections of this thesis has been presented at the following conferences: 'The Art of English', Queen Mary University, 2013; 'The Making of the Humanities III', Royal Netherlands Institute, Rome, 2012; British Association for Victorian Studies Conference, University of Sheffield, 2012; 'Transforming Objects', Northumbria University, 2012; York English Graduate Student Conference, University of York, 2012; School of English Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Sheffield, 2012; 'Strange New Today', University of Exeter 2011.

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Introduction:

The Study Guide and the Discipline of English Literature

Internal pressures: the study guide and our 'collective disciplinary unconscious'

The literature study guide has not previously received sustained scholarly attention.¹ The genre is rarely taken seriously as literary criticism or as pedagogical tool, and seems often to be dismissed out of hand as uninteresting by literary critics and educators. From such a perspective, the peripheral and apparently insignificant literature study guide might seem a curious focus for a discussion about the place and value of the discipline of English literary studies, its internal crises and the external pressures to which it is subject. And indeed, taken at face value, the study guide certainly seems inconsequential: it does not typically contribute to critical debates or seem a good agent of its declared pedagogical intent. However, this thesis takes a step back from the study guide's professed and immediate functions to reveal how the genre can serve a much more important purpose: in fact, the study guide performatively enacts both the internal tensions within English as a teaching discipline and the sometimes brutal clash between literary values and the logic of rational instrumentality, a logic which increasingly affects political as well as mainstream understandings of education and its uses. As an enactment of these problems, the study guide embodies what I will argue is a fundamental conflict within literary studies between the necessarily interested and targeted character of pedagogy and the ideals of disinterested literary reading. Moreover, the genre enacts this conflict in an unusually fraught way. This makes it an interesting expression of what I will call, following Carol Atherton, the 'disciplinary anxiety' of English literary studies: 'an uncertainty about the kind of knowledge to which literary criticism should lay claim, the usefulness of such knowledge, and the relationship between academic literary criticism and the wider practice of reading in society'.²

¹ There are shorter sections on study guides – which I discuss in detail in chapter two – in Peter Widdowson, *Hardy in History: A Study in Literary Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1989) and George Wotton, *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1985). More or less direct references to study guides are made, as discussed in chapter four, in Gerald Graff, *Clueless in Academe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) and Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). There are also a small number of short comments on and reviews of individual study guides available, such as Arnold L. Goldsmith, 'Literary Study Guides in High School and College: Supplement or Substitute', *The English Journal* 57, no. 6 (September 1968), and Charles E. Nnolim, 'Review: Chinua Achebe's "No Longer at Ease": A Critical Commentary by Steven H. Gale; Notes on Chinua Achebe's "No Longer at Ease" by Peter Mills', *Research in African Literatures* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1976).

² Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 7.

Throughout this thesis, the term ‘study guide’ refers to UK examination guides for A-level. The internal conflicts of these particular guides throw the ‘disciplinary anxiety’ into sharp relief, showcasing a complex, yet seemingly binary, opposition: on the one hand, the exam function of the study guide suggests an instrumental valuation of literary study where practical gain (in the form of examination results) takes priority over explorative literary reading. The study guide’s narrow instrumentalism thus risks restricting or counteracting what Derek Attridge has recently described as the purpose of successful literary pedagogy: encouraging ‘students to read with an openness to the unfamiliar, and to write in ways that do justice to the otherness they have encountered’.³ On the other hand, an equally strong, if waning, aspect of the genre’s heritage is the liberal humanist ideal of aesthetic education, which I understand, following Chris Baldick, as an Arnoldian ‘social mission’.⁴ I argue that this tradition, which ascribes to literary reading a disinterested and non-utilitarian yet socially empowering political function, makes the study guide less one-dimensional than its instrumentalism would seem to suggest. The complexity of the study guide genre arises from an internal dialectic between interested form and aesthetic disinterest.

An important implication of the undeniable significance of the social mission tradition in defining and shaping the discipline of English is its foregrounding of pedagogy as the site where disciplinary anxieties make themselves felt most strongly; for, the teaching of literary studies constitutes a practical testing ground for otherwise theoretical commitments. As Ben Knights puts it, ‘the intellectual history of the English family of disciplines has been deeply intertwined with its protocols for teaching and learning’. Despite this, however, Knights identifies a ‘reluctance felt by many members of the academic tribe to talk about pedagogy in public’.⁵ In its anxieties about what he recognises as ‘a space on the boundary between public and private’, English literary education has from its very beginning been governed by a set of problems relating to the dissonance between the idea of private reading and the codification of the literary for pedagogical purposes.⁶ Throughout its history, the discipline’s ambivalence about codification has continued to affect its practice. As the study guide shows us, the discipline’s reluctance to pin down its vague intuitions and implicit assumptions about its purpose is apparent in the relegated status of pedagogy. The

³ Derek Attridge, ‘The Department of English and the Experience of Literature’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline, Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Niall Gildea, Helena Goodwyn, Megan Kitching and Helen Tyson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 46.

⁴ See Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

⁵ Ben Knights, ‘English on Its Borders’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline*, 16.

⁶ Knights, ‘English on Its Borders’, 16.

widespread notion, amongst students and others, that literary analysis murders to dissect, spoiling the reading experience, echoes the ambivalence felt in the upper ranks of academia concerning the difficult and ‘intangible’ nature of the value of literary reading and analysis.⁷ In thus resisting codification, the discipline views itself as a counterforce to very ‘tangible’ and instrumentally informed educational policies and reforms. As Edward Said has put it, literary criticism is most itself in ‘its suspicion of totalizing concepts, in its discontents with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialised fiefdoms, and orthodox habits of mind.’ It is most *unlike* itself, however, ‘at the moment it starts turning into organised dogma’.⁸ In this capacity, English resists, perhaps more than other subjects, the administrative language of educational policy employed in descriptions of learning outcomes and objectives. Robert Eaglestone describes a sentiment in this vein often expressed by English teachers at secondary level: that ‘this is not “how we do things” in English’.⁹

In Bill Readings’ ruined university, however, things are done in precisely this administrative and calculating way. Here, the link between culture and the nation state has been sundered (and in Anglo-American universities, where figures such as Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman have acted as mediators of Humboldtian ideals, this link was previously maintained through a conception of specifically *literary* culture), leading to an exchange of traditional cultural values for a culture of ‘excellence’.¹⁰ Such a culture of excellence, however, has not just had ruinous effects for higher education; it has made itself felt more strongly still in schools. As Eaglestone points out, it is of the utmost importance for the future of English that we expand the current notion of the discipline as belonging primarily in the university. He invites us to view English literary studies as an *institution*, the ‘huge core’ of which is made up by secondary school education.¹¹ Indeed, he points out, the influential work of figures such as Gramsci, Foucault, and Derrida has taught us that ‘institutional issues shape our thought more than we commonly acknowledge or admit’.¹² In working from a similar conception of the discipline as institution, this thesis treats English

⁷ See also Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), xix; *Clueless in Academe*, 96-112.

⁸ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Faber, 1984), 29.

⁹ Robert Eaglestone, ‘The Future of English and Institutional Consciousness: Threats and Disengagement’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline*, 110.

¹⁰ See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Eaglestone, ‘The Future of English’, 107.

¹² Eaglestone, ‘The Future of English’, 105.

at its different educational levels as a continuum, despite the differing functions that the subject has at various stages. Thus, it recognises that as a university subject, English relies upon its A-level counterpart for student recruitment. However, write Eaglestone and Simon Kövesi, ‘there is a huge, rarely-crossed divide between English at secondary school level and English in higher education’.¹³ Atherton concurs, stating that whilst ‘governments have attempted to impose increasing uniformity on universities in the form of standardised subject benchmarks and the documentation of aims and objectives, university syllabuses are not subjected to the same kind of centralisation as the school curriculum’.¹⁴ The tighter regulation of school curricula paired with the university department’s relative freedom to design and examine its own courses, has opened up a gap ‘between the heritage-dominated National Curriculum that operates in schools and the multiplicity of forms that the subject takes in higher education’. This is why A-level, ‘the bridge between the two’, constitutes ‘a particularly contentious site for debates about the nature of literary study’.¹⁵

The literature study guide for A-level exam revision, too, is a part of the discipline of English literature as an institution. As such, it reflects tellingly upon both secondary and university English. Its role, moreover, is unique insofar as it operates outside of educational institutions, whilst its writers keep a close eye on examination board requirements for the study guide’s effective functioning and, of course, marketing. Despite its outsider role in education, however, the study guide represents an effective viewing platform for the discipline and its challenges. This is because the discipline’s anxieties concerning codification are manifested so clearly within the genre: as I will show, they are recognisable in the study guide’s conflicting rhetorics of liberal humanist aesthetics and instrumentalism. The unspoken conflicts within the study guide between these two ideological strands seem to seep out through the cracks of the guide’s self-presentation as ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’. Thus, in its attempts to simplify its subject, the study guide inadvertently testifies to the continued significance of the disciplinary conflicts that Gerald Graff urges us to teach.¹⁶ So, in taking a closer look at the internal dynamics of study guide rhetoric, this thesis deals in disciplinary anxieties. The discussion is motivated by matters fundamental to English literary studies as a discipline: how to maintain the pleasure (or free play) of literary reading

¹³ Robert Eaglestone and Simon Kövesi, ‘The State of English, 2014: A View From Higher Education’, *Teaching English*, no. 4 (2014): 19.

¹⁴ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 156.

¹⁵ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 156-57.

¹⁶ See Graff, *Professing Literature*, and *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993).

when engaged in analysis; what the social value of literature might be and how it can be made most useful; how to codify literature, not just to enable its pedagogy, but also its competition with ‘harder’ sciences; how to assess, or indeed avoid having to assess, the discipline’s instrumental value.

This thesis does not propose to give answers to these fundamental questions, but seeks to foreground their centrality. The study guide, importantly, reflects that centrality in a symptomatic way. Its relationship to these questions is not always conscious or intended, and so the study guide comes to express unspoken intuitions that underpin disciplinary practice. As such, it reflects what the editors of *English Studies: The State of the Discipline, Past, Present, and Future* have called our ‘culturally and socially acquired collective unconscious.’ Thus, the genre gives unconscious expression to our inherited and ‘entangled negotiations of the [discipline’s] past’.¹⁷

In order to bring out its implicit engagement with these negotiations – with questions that lie at the heart of the discipline –, the discussion will concentrate on the most well-known A-level study guide series, as these more popular series are better integrated into the discipline as institution and thus better placed to reproduce its problems. Whilst the series appear under slightly varying titles and have at times been passed between publishers, reflecting the formulaic and typically interchangeable character of publications within the genre, their titles are variants upon the following: *York Notes*, *Brodie’s Notes*, *Methuen Notes*, *Macmillan Master Guides*, and *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*. My analysis of this material extends from the genre’s early formation in the 1930s to around the year 2000. After this, the genre moves onto the internet and becomes a different, and more diverse, phenomenon, the examination of which would require us to enter into a range of additional questions – arising, for example, from the transnationalisation of the study guide market, questions about class and accessibility in relation to new media, and so forth – which would take us beyond the remit of the specific genealogy I am concerned to elucidate.¹⁸

¹⁷ Niall Gildea, Helena Goodwyn, Megan Kitching, and Helen Tyson, ‘Introduction’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline*, 2.

¹⁸ Like any other, this study could have been otherwise demarcated. Understood broadly, the literature study guide genre is sprawling and diverse and its manifestations are not always unified in purpose or intended application. Liberally conceived, the study guide genre might include *Cambridge Companions* as well as other literature casebooks for use in the university. Such a broad conception, moreover, might also accommodate *Literature for Dummies* and *An Idiots Guide to...* There are study guide series for the lay reader and study guides pitched at different educational levels; GCSE, A-level and undergraduate. In addition, the study guide is an international phenomenon which thrives in America just as well as, if not better than, in the UK. However, for the reasons given above, the UK A-level study guide, and the above series in particular, are especially well suited to showcase the interest/disinterest dialectic within English literary studies as an institution.

External pressures: the effects of instrumentalism on disciplinary practice

Before briefly mapping out the structure of the thesis, we will turn for a moment to another significant pressure that is currently affecting the discipline: the study guide, expressive as it is of the *internal* disputes of the discipline and its pedagogy between interest and disinterest, also indicates the way that this fundamental disciplinary anxiety comes to be exacerbated in the face of *external* pressures. English literary studies – continuously destabilising itself through ongoing renegotiations, continuously evading definition – is characterised, as described above, by a certain ‘intangibility’. Its value is difficult – perhaps impossible – to describe satisfactorily within what Judith Butler has referred to as ‘an idiom that can be recognized by those who most clearly need to be convinced of that value’.¹⁹ For ‘[w]hat authority’, asks Knights, ‘could this endlessly re-forming and historically counter-cultural discipline carry in the age of the neoliberal university, of modularized packets of knowledge and assessment, of student loans and ubiquitous instrumentalist rhetoric?’²⁰ And indeed, due to its lack of a unified and immediately recognisable core, the discipline is particularly vulnerable to instrumentalist attack.²¹ An original vantage point from which to address this vulnerability is provided by an examination of the study guide genre.

English shares its vulnerability to instrumentalist attack, however, with other humanities disciplines. As Stefan Collini points out, the currently ongoing debate about the role and value of the humanities is characterised by a sense of crisis.²² The humanities (along with the broader idea of the university as a public institution) are indeed facing challenges posed by external, and economically informed, political forces. In the UK, neoliberal government policies are calling for academic subjects to *justify* themselves in terms of quantifiable ‘impact’ beyond academia, spurred by recent and ongoing austerity measures and funding cuts to higher education.²³ A great number of critics and scholars have addressed the problems that follow from these instrumentalist demands, and it is widely felt that this

¹⁹ Judith Butler, ‘Ordinary, Incredulous’, in *The Humanities and Public Life*, ed. Peter Brooks with Hilary Jewett (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 28.

²⁰ Knights, ‘English on Its Borders’, 21.

²¹ See Gildea, Goodwyn, Kitching, and Tyson, ‘Introduction’.

²² Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 63.

²³ The English Subject Centre has fallen victim to cuts in the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)’s budget. The Institute of English Studies, too, is imperilled at the time of writing (see Richard Adams, ‘University of London Plan to Close Institute of English Studies on Hold’, *Guardian*, May 23, 2014, accessed Jan 22, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/23/university-london-institute-of-english-studies>).

instrumentalism is especially at odds with the ethos of the humanities: that humanities disciplines by their very nature defy this kind of quantification.²⁴ The following comment from Jonathan Bate is representative of this belief:

There is something especially inappropriate about the attempt to *quantify* the ‘value’ and ‘impact’ of work in the humanities in economic terms, since the very nature of the humanities is to address the messy, debatable and unquantifiable but essentially human dimensions of life, such as history, beauty, imagination, faith, truth, goodness, justice and freedom. The only test of a philosophical argument, an historical hypothesis or an aesthetic judgement is time – a long period of time, not the duration of a government spending review.²⁵

Faced with the utility-driven approach to research and education of ‘Performance-Based Research Funding’ initiatives such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the Research Excellence Framework (REF), we might respond, with Nigel Wood, that ‘knowledge is sometimes to be prized not exactly only for its own sake but because it addresses questions not yet voiced or apparent, problems that public scrutiny is not yet aware of, issues well outside of accepted “subject understanding” and skills yet to be fully named’.²⁶

It would seem that the study guide’s instrumental purpose of improving examination results for the individual learner, coupled with its formulaic question-and-answer style format, closes down possibilities for expanding enquiry beyond the remits of its narrow understanding of learning objectives; it can be seen to have a limiting effect on students’ encounters with the literary. What is more, the study guide also represents the kind of instrumentalism that has informed the rise of the student consumer: its aspirational attitude to meritocratic status through assessment attests to its kinship with ‘league table thinking’ and what I will describe, in chapter one, as a general ‘neoliberal ethos’ in education. The massive increase, in 2010, in university tuition fees and its consequent effect upon student loans, and the growing influence of the National Student Survey (NSS), constitute other expressions of this ideological shift in university politics. Higher education, writes Andrew

²⁴ Importantly, however, it is widely felt that such methods are built upon a somewhat naïve conception of the immediate societal ‘impact’ of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Collini points out that the public notion of the purpose and value of scientific disciplines as more immediately transparent than those of humanities subjects ‘may be no more informed or accurate than it is of the humanities, but a familiar and easily graspable case can be made in terms of “discovering” truths about the natural world and then applying those discoveries to better the human condition’. He comments, moreover, that ‘a no less cogent case’ can be made ‘about the importance of understanding the human world, though it is misleading if this is couched exclusively in terms of discovering new truths, and anyway the immediate benefits of such improved understanding are harder to specify briefly’. (Collini, *Universities*, 61).

²⁵ Jonathan Bate, ‘Introduction’, in *The Public Value of the Humanities*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 6.

²⁶ Nigel Wood, ‘The Public Sphere and Worldliness: The Present Dialogue within English Studies’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline*, 54.

McGettigan, is being presented ‘as solely a private benefit to the individual consumer; even as a financial asset where the return on investment is seen in higher earnings upon graduation’.²⁷ In this thesis, the study guide – torn between resistance to and sympathy with this set of ideas – represents an early-developing symptom of the sort of thinking that lies behind this consumer-orientated shift in the student identity. Thus conceived, the study guide exposes the vulnerability of English literary studies to the external discourse of commodification. The following chapters will show, however, that the discipline’s continuous internal re-negotiations of its identity and purpose – especially within the field of literary pedagogy and didactics – at times relate to demands for utility in complex, and not always directly antithetical, ways: I will show that the story of this multifaceted relationship between the interested elements of literary pedagogy and external instrumental pressures is reflected in the study guide’s historical development.

In important ways, then, the argument of this thesis turns on the central importance to the discipline of the effect of various forms of instrumentalism on its practice. The present work traces the study guide’s response to instrumentalism within a particular narrative of the discipline’s history which focuses on pedagogy and liberal humanist literary aesthetics; one which owes much to the histories of English written in the 1980s by Chris Baldick, Terry Eagleton and others.²⁸ Various other narratives charting the discipline’s history are, of course, both possible and available, but I have focused on this narrative because it best brings out the way in which the study guide is embroiled in these issues.

The centrality of the questions interrogated by this thesis – about the impact of the collision between instrumentalism and literary values – for current disciplinary practice, is evidenced by their significance throughout the discipline’s various fields. One area in which we can see the importance of the impact of instrumentalism on the discipline is in the emergence from literary and cultural studies of the interdisciplinary field of ‘critical university studies’, which critically investigates the rise of academic capitalism and neoliberalism in higher education, the changing public role of the university, the working conditions of university academics and the rise of the student consumer.²⁹ The felt need for

²⁷ Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 9.

²⁸ See Baldick, *Social Mission*; Terry Eagleton, ‘The Rise of English’, in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 15–46; Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of Scrutiny* (London: New Left Books, 1979); Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1989).

²⁹ Jeffrey J. Williams claims that the field has, in some ways, ‘succeeded literary theory as a nexus of intellectual energy’. Unlike postmodern literary theory, he argues, critical university studies not only examines the way knowledge is constructed, but also ‘looks reflexively at “the knowledge factory” itself (as the sociologist Stanley Aronowitz has called it), examining the university as both a discursive and a material phenomenon, one that extends through many facets of contemporary life’ (‘Deconstructing Academe: The

such a field amongst humanists makes clear how widespread the feeling of a threat from instrumentalism has become.³⁰

We also see the impact of different forms of instrumentalism within politically charged areas of literary theory that afford non-normative and anti-universalist perspectives upon literature's cultural role, such as feminist literary criticism, queer studies, subaltern studies, and post-colonial literary criticism. Here we see a tension between anti-instrumentalist politics on the one hand and a justification of the value of literature and literary study in terms of its potential social function on the other – the latter being, as I will later explore, effectively another kind of instrumentality at work within the discipline.³¹

A different way of framing the social value of literary studies is pursued within the growing field of cognitive literary studies. Here, the 'intangible' character of the discipline, and the failure to demonstrate its 'impact', has led to a move towards scientific models for literary study, signalling a return to various kinds of universalism. Within this field, it is recognised that 'literary works – whether fictional or not – have an emotional and tangible effect on readers and on the real world in which we live with literature'.³² Thus, Suzanne Keen writes: 'For the first time we might investigate whether human differences in mirror neuron activity can be altered by exposure to art, to teaching, to literature.'³³ The importance of reading literary fiction for school education, moreover, is addressed by Lisa Zunshine. Fiction, she writes, 'always functions on a higher level of metacognitive complexity than nonfiction, and it can achieve that higher level without explicit use of metacognitive vocabulary'. Therefore, she argues, the reading of fiction improves 'students' capacity for complex thinking in all academic disciplines'.³⁴ Relatedly, Richard Walsh argues for the

Birth of Critical University Studies', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb 19, 2012, accessed Mar 20, 2015, <http://chronicle.com/article/An-Emerging-Field-Deconstructs/130791>).

³⁰ Whilst critical university studies is largely an American research field, comparable work is being done within UK English literary studies by figures such as Collini and Thomas Docherty. Commenting on threats to universities from government policies, the latter writes: 'We need to decide whether we do indeed want to have institutions like a University that can help us search constantly for justice, freedom and democracy. My wager [...] is that we do indeed not only want those things, but that we also need them, and we need them with increasing urgency'. (Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* [London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011], 8). See also *Universities At War* (London: SAGE, 2015).

³¹ It is against such a background that the post-colonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak seeks to 'sabotage' the universalism of Schiller's aesthetic education and reconceptualise it as the last remaining instrument for global justice and democracy. See *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³² Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 152.

³³ Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), viii.

³⁴ Lisa Zunshine, 'Why Fiction Does It Better', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec 13, 2013, 5. See also *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

fundamental role of narrative fiction in ‘what it is to be human’.³⁵ He writes that ‘[h]uman cognition and narrative are mutually, recursively reinforcing; accordingly, narrative does not merely depend upon a general context of human values, it substantially constitutes that context with respect to the temporality of consciousness’.³⁶

Another example of a field responding to the pressure on English literary studies to justify its social value is the multidisciplinary field of medical humanities. Here, a central role is being played by literary studies, especially with respect to the subfield of narrative medicine. As Rita Charon explains, this research field mutually reinforces the two disciplines of medicine and literary studies: ‘what medicine *lacks* today – in singularity, humility, accountability, empathy – can, in part, be provided through intensive narrative training. Literary studies and narrative theory, on the other hand, seek practical ways to transduce their conceptual knowledge into palpable influence in the world, and a connection with health care can do that’.³⁷

What is clear from these examples is the way in which the need to respond to an external pressure to justify the value of English literary studies in instrumental terms is being felt all across the broad church of the discipline, and is having a meaningful impact on how English literary scholars think and talk about their discipline’s value and purpose. It is in the context of this (often defensive) atmosphere that a study of the study guide genre, as a lens through which to clarify and nuance these anxieties, seems to me to be a worthwhile task.

The structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is dialectical insofar as it traces an inherent contradiction within the study guide – one which in turn reflects upon the relationship between the guide and the enveloping discipline of English. This contradiction consists in the study guide’s difficulty in reconciling its participation in the ongoing process of instrumental rationalisation (of which I take certain values associated with neoliberalism to be the most recent manifestation) with its liberal humanist heritage (associated with the social mission tradition and the tradition of aesthetic education). The thesis follows a three-part structure: although all five chapters discuss both sides of this contradiction, chapters one and two concentrate closely

³⁵ Richard Walsh, ‘The Force of Fictions’, in *Why Study Literature?*, ed. Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Louise Brix Jacobsen, Rikke Andersen Kraglund, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Camilla Møhring Reestorff (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 235.

³⁶ Walsh, ‘The Force of Fictions’, 240.

³⁷ Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), viii.

on the study guide's instrumentalism whilst chapters three and four take the social mission as their primary object. The diachronic case study in chapter five, moreover, discusses both sides of the study guide's internal dispute, and asks what this troubled genre might teach us.

My first chapter investigates the presence of a 'neoliberal ethos' within the study guide. This ethos is described as neoliberal because it 'responsibilises' the student consumer for her own educational development understood in terms of grade attainment, and for the development of her 'human capital'. Despite the powerful presence of this instrumentalism within the study guide, however, I also identify its strong current of liberal humanist aesthetics. What is more, I show that the opposition between these two ideological influences upon the study guide – *interest* and *disinterest* – is not as neatly binary as one might suppose.

This murky binary between instrumentalism and literary values within the study guide is explored further in chapter two – a case study of study guides on Thomas Hardy's fiction. Here, a 'realist norm' is identified within the study guide genre. This realist norm represents a certain facile conception of literary realism which is seen to inform the study guide's instrumentalism by enabling its plot-driven function. The chapter thus describes how the study guide's liberal humanist aesthetic impulse is made to serve an instrumental purpose. It also addresses the habitual ways in which the genre has perpetuated itself through monotonous repetition of particular readings.

In chapter three, I argue that the reason why the study guide's liberal humanist aesthetics are so entrenched within the guide, despite the dominance of instrumentalism, is that the genre actually grows out of a humanist project which sought to disseminate disinterested values throughout the social sphere. In discussing Arnold's social mission via his 'proto-study guide' *A Bible Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration* (1872), I show that the social mission project, aiming at the cultivation of democracy, itself embodies a political and pedagogical interestedness which disrupts its disinterested ideal. Hence, the study guide's instrumental quality is not wholly caused by the influence of neoliberal and other forms of rationalising market logic: an element of instrumentality has been present in the study guide since the very beginning of the genre. The study guide – uncomfortably – brings out and externalises the inherent instrumentality of the disinterested humanist tradition, reflecting the necessary codification of the literary required by pedagogy.

Chapter four discusses the continued worry about codification in the Cambridge English faculty in the 1920s and 1930s, and argues that the need for the study guide as a tool for socialisation is exacerbated by the polarisation of mass culture and 'culture proper'. The study guide represents, for liberal humanist aesthetics, an uncomfortable reminder that

immediate aesthetic experience is never spontaneous, but enabled through the internalisation of a particular social code. The educational method of practical criticism, as it was developed by I.A. Richards and the Leavises, is taken to represent an intensification of the exclusivity of the ‘in-group’ of culture, thus strengthening the rationale for the study guide as a ‘manual for taste’.

In the final chapter, I give a case study which follows the study guide’s dialectical development towards increased instrumentalism. Here, I contrast the neoliberal study guide with the study guide of the 1950s, where the ideal of disinterest is still strong. I also discuss influences upon the genre in the intervening period, such as the effects of Thatcherite educational policies, and the disabling impact of ‘Theory’ on the study guide’s liberal humanist aesthetic impulse. Because it confronts us with the internal tension between interest and disinterest within humanist pedagogy, I argue, the study guide lends us a space for discussing whether a *purely* disinterested contemplation of literature is possible, necessary, or desirable – or whether literature is enriched by its many social functions – including its provision of a space for aesthetic appreciation and critical thinking, undisturbed by the pressures placed on the individual by the neoliberal ethos. The implications of such a reconceptualised notion of disinterest for the discipline in times of neoliberalisation forms the focus of my conclusion.

Part I

Interest

Chapter 1

A Conflicted Relationship: The Literature Study Guide and the Neoliberal Ethos

A-level study guides such as *York Notes*, *Brodie's Notes*, *Macmillan Master Guides* and a number of similar series compose a genre of low status 'criticism' which is primarily associated with its instrumentally instructive function. The formulaic and pragmatic method of the study guide's treatment of literature, it is often supposed, is at odds with the humanist conception of the aesthetic value of the literary. This chapter seeks to explore the inherent polarity in this notion of the study guide, where the instrumental nature of the guide's function jars with ideas of disinterested literary reading. Indeed, the study guide occupies a highly conflicted space between literary humanist values and instrumental rationality. And whilst phenomena are never so simple nor so sanitised that they can be successfully identified solely with instrumentality or with disinterest, this binary opposition between interest – or instrumentality – and disinterest in the study guide is helpful because it provides a starting point for the unpacking of the complex makeup of the genre. As Stefan Collini has pointed out, the dualistic opposition between the 'useful' and the 'useless' is something of a caricature.¹ This chapter seeks, then, to complicate the image of a correlated polarity, arguing that the study guide manifests an internal, and highly conflicted, tension in humanist pedagogy between 'disinterest' and 'interested' codification. Consequently, the study guide also manifests a deeper problem for the discipline of English. That deeper problem, however, will be brought out in the context of the much more complicated external influence of neoliberal ideology upon education. The main objective of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the study guide's relationship with a neoliberal political rationality in order to facilitate reflection upon the ramifications of that relationship for the discipline of English.

As the sociologist Les Levidow puts it, neoliberalisation can intrude upon education in subtle ways: 'ideological language, funding priorities, public-private partnerships, tuition fees, cost-benefit analysis, performance indicators, curriculum changes, new technology, students as consumers of pre-packaged goods, etc.'. He emphasises that critics 'need to demonstrate how all these aspects are linked, how they change the content of academic work and learning, and how they arise from efforts to discipline labour for capital, as part of a

¹ Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 39-60.

global agenda'.² This chapter is written in that critical spirit. It aims to describe how the study guide, in its instrumental role, came to participate in a neoliberalised project undermining critical thinking and non-instrumental values in the name of the expansion of economic growth. This participation is carried out mainly through the study guide's propagation of a neoliberal work ethic. That propagation will be examined here in a discussion of how neoliberal ideology, like previous manifestations of instrumental rationalisation, exerts its influence *both* from above, through societal structures, *and* through the shaping of subjectivity at the level of the individual.

The discussion of the neoliberal study guide will show that study guides are part of an ideological structure which responsabilises individual students as entrepreneurial subjects through the habituation of instrumental thinking. The encroachment of a neoliberal ethos upon the literary, as well as other non-utilitarian spheres such as education and welfare, will be explored through a comparison of study guides and pop-psychological self-help books within the Foucauldian framework of governmental rationality. This latter framework, furthermore, will allow us to understand how and why the study guide's instrumental function permits it to subsume within itself two ideologically conflicting loyalties: the construction and propagation of the neoliberal work ethic *and* liberal humanism's disinterested ideal. Towards the end of the chapter, a brief consideration will be given of aspects of contemporary defences of the humanities that seek to utilise disinterest against the instrumentality of neoliberalism, and their mutually illuminating relation with the study guide's internal conflict between instrumental and disinterested thinking.

Disinterested humanist values versus instrumental rationalisation

As indicated above, the study guide is often presumed to be a vehicle of a calculated, and perhaps cynical, approach to success in examinations. There seems to be an uneasiness amongst literary critics and pedagogues that the study guide treats the literary according to a formulaic method that can reduce its transcendent potential and 'handicap original thought'.³ In its capacity as examination guide, the study guide genre does indeed operate, as part of its instrumental pedagogy, through a formulaic and predictable procedure. Since the 1950s, it has functioned, across series, more or less exactly according to the following configuration: a section on the author in question and her or his work; short chapter

² Les Levidow, 'Neoliberal Agendas for Higher Education', in *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Jonston (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 161.

³ Arnold L. Goldsmith, 'Literary Study Guides in High School and College: Supplement or Substitute', *The English Journal* 57, no. 6 (September 1968): 805.

summaries with textual notes and revision questions; sections on characters, setting and plot, background, structure, and style; general study questions, often including sample answers or sample essays; a section on further reading, often fairly limited. Study guides to dramatic works use the same formula, and occasionally, particularly in the case of Shakespeare's plays, add a section on passages to learn by heart. When dealing with poetry, the formula remains roughly the same. The sections which exclusively pertain to narrative and drama are removed, such as the section on characters or that on plot, but individual poems are paraphrased in summary form by way of adaptation of the 'chapter summary' sections for guides dealing with novels. The rationale behind this formulaic treatment of the literary is obviously pedagogical, but seems excessively instrumental. This is because it represents an instrumentalism extrinsic to the value of the object of study: the study guide's main concern is ultimately not the teaching of literature, but examination success, and this is reflected in its homogenising, algorithmic form.

A common argument against the use of literature study guides is based on the perception that students use them as a substitute for the primary literary text, reducing the disinterested potential of literary experience to 'cheat sheet' formulae. In 1968, Professor Arnold L. Goldsmith of Wayne State University was sufficiently worried by his students' usage of study guides that he likened them to "LSD, heroin, marijuana, and all of these drugs put together"⁴ Whilst Goldsmith's comparison between study guides and narcotics seems, perhaps, somewhat hysterical, it depends upon the less controversial aesthetic idealist notion that the study guide corrupts aesthetic experience, providing a substitute in place of genuine appreciation. The study guide's interference with aesthetic experience, moreover, is occasioned by its instrumental approach which treats literature as a means to educational attainment rather than as an end in itself, thus compromising *disinterested* reading. Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790) is the text from which our understanding of disinterest in this context stems, and has been of paradigmatic importance for the discipline of English Literature, permeating thinking about the place and importance of artworks as transcending the interests of individuals and allowing contemplation of that which transcends our own time and place. Yet the study guide's highly interested format, and the tension between that and the founding liberal humanist ideal of disinterest, can also be seen as just the intensification of a conflict inherent in literary education at large.

All teaching involves an element of instrumentalism in the sense that it serves as a means to an end. However, within the particular framework of literary education – for which the inherent instrumental side to pedagogy is difficult to reconcile with the liberal humanist

⁴ Goldsmith, 'Literary Study Guides', 803.

dictum that culture should be disinterested – the study guide’s extraordinary instrumentality foregrounds the issue. The study guide represents a disagreeable reminder that literary education takes place within an economic logic: literary humanism cannot disseminate its disinterested values via pedagogy without becoming trapped in the ironic contradiction of the objectification of those values through the interested activity of pedagogy itself. The literature study guide offends literary critics and humanists in large part because it embodies the difficult relationship between the educational institution and the values we, as humanist educators, seek to transmit. What is referred to as the intrinsic or abstract value of the literary work is hardly presentable as a fact that can be taught, or something which, once taught, should lead to quantifiable results for interested individuals. Literature study guides are insensitive to this situation insofar as their very function, as well as their market appeal, implies the subordination of higher cultural and moral values in the learner’s order of priorities to practical gain or personal educational achievement.

The neoliberal study guide

The study guide’s instrumentality and its preoccupation with practical gain are indicative of its affinity with an examination system which has come to be heavily affected by neoliberal educational policy. In the course of the past thirty years the idea of the need for league tables, a consequence of the requirement for educational institutions to demonstrate competitive efficiency, has become hegemonic.⁵ Neoliberal demands for quantifiable results through standardised testing misapprehend the functioning and core values of humanities disciplines, the outcomes and impacts of which are not taken by humanists to be demonstrable through the methods and measurements preferred by neoliberalism. Unfortunately, this scenario poses a threat to disciplines and institutions that cannot provide proof of their efficiency according to neoliberal principles.⁶ This situation is particularly damaging for humanities subjects, because neoliberal capitalism evaluates education according to its value as consumer good within a framework where value is understood in terms of what ‘use’

⁵ Becky Francis, Christine Skelton and Barbara Read, *The Identities and Practices of High Achieving Pupils: Negotiating Achievement and Peer Cultures* (London: Continuum, 2012), 3-4. See also Collini, *Universities*, 16-17.

⁶ A recent example of this neoliberal misunderstanding of humanist values is the decision by former Conservative education minister Michael Gove to remove literature from core English on the GCSE curriculum, stating that English, as well as other subjects, needs to be made more rigid to prepare pupils for university. See Polly Toynbee, ‘In Michael Gove’s world Jane Austen, Orwell and Dickens will die out’, *Guardian*, Nov. 5, 2013, accessed Nov. 5, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/05/gove-austen-orwell-dickens-die-out>.

something might be for self-interested agents; the humanist dictum that aesthetic experience is ‘disinterested’ is thus dismissed, since ‘disinterestedness’ is equated with economic uselessness. The literature study guide has come to participate in this commodification of education by advertising utilitarian approaches to exam success which stand in opposition to humanist notions of intrinsic literary value and disinterestedness. Study guide advertisements, such as the following, tie the notion of improved examination results to the economic language of value for money and betray the place of the study guide within the economic logic of the marketplace: “YOUR BIGGEST BARGAIN IN BETTER GRADES... ONLY \$1 AT YOUR BOOKSELLER’S.”⁷ The association of the literature study guide with neoliberal and other forms of utilitarian thinking foregrounds its instrumental function rather than its role as participant in the dissemination of literary and humanist values.

In his account of the longstanding conflict in UK universities between the ‘useless’ and the ‘useful’,⁸ Collini has shown that this situation is by no means new. Whilst neoliberalism, with its insistence upon demonstrable ‘usefulness’, is but the most recent manifestation of the latter part of this binary, however, I would argue that the hegemonic status that neoliberalism has been able to achieve represents a significant development in the conflict. Neoliberalism’s hegemonic status, which has spread from political economics into the very fabric of British cultural values in the social sphere, leads to the commodification of education as an instrument for the expansion of capital. Ravi Kumar argues that this situation has a detrimental effect on critical thinking, a capacity generally held to be cultivated by literary and humanities disciplines in particular. It ‘transforms the character (*content*) of education, which not only gets reduced to *skill development* [...], but also ensures that *criticality* remains a distant agenda of education’.⁹ Neoliberalism’s preference for the more efficient and supposedly ideologically neutral ‘training’ over ‘education’ is an expression of this relegation of critical thinking: ‘The change in nomenclature is important both symbolically and in terms of actual accurate descriptiveness’ of a new ““safe,” sanitized and detheorized education’.¹⁰ But, in the words of the Campaign for the Future of Higher

⁷ Goldsmith, ‘Literary Study Guides’, 803.

⁸ Collini, *Universities*, 39-60.

⁹ Ravi Kumar, ‘Neoliberal Education and Imagining Strategies of Resistance: An Introduction’, in *Education and the Reproduction of Capital: Neoliberal Knowledge and Counterstrategies*, ed. Ravi Kumar (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 7.

¹⁰ Dave Hill and Ravi Kumar, ‘Neoliberalism and its Impacts’, in *Global Neoliberalism and Education and its Consequences*, ed. Dave Hill and Ravi Kumar (New York: Routledge, 2009), 18. See also John McMurtry, ‘Education and the market model’, *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, no. 25 (1991): 215.

Education: ‘Education is not something which can be “delivered”, consumed and crossed off the list. Rather, it is a continuing and reflective process, an essential component of any worthwhile life – the very antithesis to a commodity’.¹¹ The quick and formulaic way in which the study guide seeks to lead to top exam results – its highly instrumental approach to revision – means that it provides simplified stock answers rather than opening a discursive space for critical thought and disinterested appreciation; that it has come to take part in a neoliberal devaluation of critical thinking. And, moreover, because its methods are modelled on the demands of A-level examination boards, it would seem that the study guide has come to reflect the broader influence of neoliberal rationality in the systems of assessment. The relationship between assessment and neoliberal education policy, however, will be discussed in more detail in chapter five; the present chapter will discuss how – as illustrated by the neoliberal influence on the literature study guide – neoliberalism (strictly speaking an economic theory) exerts its power over the social sphere and education at the level both of the state and the individual.

When literature study materials are characterised by an instrumental ethos which stems from neoliberal economics – a sphere which *prima facie* seems at several removes from that of English literature and its supposedly disinterested instruction – this depends on the broader dissemination of neoliberalism in British society. Building on the work of Henry Giroux, Sophia A. McClennen describes the key to understanding the dissemination of neoliberal ideology throughout the social sphere in terms of its public pedagogical function: ‘the precise ways in which it teaches individuals to live, to understand their place in the world, and to imagine the future’.¹² David Harvey describes the neoliberal market as ‘presumed to work as an appropriate guide —an ethic—for all human action.’¹³ This involves the infiltration of areas previously not associated with the logic of markets and economics. For education specifically, neoliberalism has not only been an extremely influential discourse in terms of policies and practices, but also in ‘defining the educational common sense, what can be thought or imagined about schools’.¹⁴ In this connection, it is instructive to recall Thatcher’s contention that ‘there is no alternative’, perhaps the most

¹¹ Campaign for the Future of Higher Education, 2003, <http://www.cfhe.org.uk> (site discontinued), quoted in Hill and Kumar, ‘Neoliberalism and its Impacts’, 21.

¹² Sophia A. McClennen, ‘Neoliberalism and the Crisis of Intellectual Engagement’, in *Academic Freedom in the Post-9/11 Era*, ed. Edward J. Carvalho and David B. Downing (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 205.

¹³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 165.

¹⁴ Gustavo Fischmann, ‘Introduction’, in *Contesting Neoliberal Education: Public Resistance and Collective Advance*, ed. Dave Hill (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

iconic example of this ‘common sense’ in neoliberal discourse.¹⁵ Fischmann writes that there is ‘a hegemonic inevitability about the logic of neoliberal reforms, particularly because these reforms are presented as simply rational-technical solutions to the problems of under-achievement, separated from their ideological and philosophical origins’.¹⁶ Neoliberal enthusiasm for ‘sanitising’ public institutions in this way leads to an omnipresent implementation of what Bourdieu described as the ‘gospel’ of neoliberalism, an expression of a right-wing ideology which claims to be free of and opposed to ideology as such.¹⁷ According to Bourdieu, neoliberal discourse takes it to be self-evident and ideologically unproblematic that ‘maximum growth’ is the ‘ultimate and sole goal of human actions’.¹⁸

The neoliberal notion that there can be no alternative to its hegemonic status would appear to lend credence to the key Marxist idea that capitalism infringes on every area of human life. Marx and Engels held that the financially interested bourgeoisie:

left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’ It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value and in place of numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade.¹⁹

In this quotation lurks the notion of disinterest as opposed to self-interest, and it is evident that Marx and Engels’s position that instrumentality destroys valuable aspects of human life is reconcilable with the liberal humanist conception of disinterest. Whilst much of 20th-century Marxism has been antagonistic to liberal humanism and its conception of disinterest, the above quotation is helpful in understanding the cohabitation, and occasional amalgamation, of Marxist and liberal humanist lines of thought in literary studies.²⁰ In both

¹⁵ Thatcher first employed this piece of rhetoric in a May 1980 speech (Margaret Thatcher, ‘Speech to Conservative Women’s Conference, May 21, 1980’, [Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed Nov. 20, 2014, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104368>]). Subsequently, this expression was used by Thatcher so often ‘that for a while her enemies nicknamed her Tina’ (Iain McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], p. 12). See also Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: O Books, 2009), p. 8.

¹⁶ Fischmann, ‘Introduction’, 5.

¹⁷ Fischmann, ‘Introduction’, 3; Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: New Press, 1998), 126.

¹⁸ Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance*, 30.

¹⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Penguin, 2002), 222.

²⁰ A further indication of the affinity between Marx and humanist notions of disinterest is to be found in Althusser’s criticism, in ‘Marxism and Humanism’, that Marx participates in a humanist ideology which is ultimately bourgeois. See Louis Althusser, ‘Marxism and Humanism’, in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005).

Marxist and liberal humanist thought, moreover, instrumental reason compromises the ‘disinterested’ spheres that it encroaches upon. For both, the form and function of the literature study guide can be taken to testify to the fact that quantitative means-ends thinking spreads out to areas previously protected from this type of valuation, by reflecting the way that economic and rationalising thinking has been implemented within the area of literary studies. As indicated above, the study guide reflects the influence of instrumental thinking upon the discipline as institution via its relationship with the systems of assessment; when students of English view their subject as the sort of thing that might be approached through the study guide’s calculating procedure, this reflects how instrumentalism affects the discipline also as practice. Hence, to those schooled in literary and humanist disciplines more broadly, the amalgamation of economic logic and the sphere of culture is intuitively crude and reductive. It evokes the attitude Matthew Arnold referred to as the utilitarian tendency of British society towards the valuation of ‘things like coal or iron as constituting the greatness of England’.²¹ The presence of neoliberal ideology in literary education thus represents the consolidation of instrumental tendencies that have long exerted pressure upon ideas of literary pedagogy and cultural value. Moreover, as chapter three will show, the study guide has always been responsive to these tendencies.

Literature as anti-instrumental social power: culture industry and stock-responses

The expression of the instrumentalisation of education and the broader social field in neoliberalism is, of course, historically situated in the recent past; the uncomfortable pairing of instrumentality with literary culture has a much more extensive history. Indeed, contemporary accounts of the spread of neoliberal thinking into areas of life previously thought to be outside the purview of the logic of the market are prefigured by the concerns of earlier twentieth-century critics. Amongst these critics, the work of the Frankfurt School figures prominently. Adorno and Horkheimer use the term ‘culture industry’ to refer to that branch of industry which produces culture as a commodity focused towards economic success – in contrast with what they consider authentic culture. Adorno and Horkheimer view the culture industry as an expression of the imposition of instrumental rationality upon elements of human life which had previously not been instrumentalised – ultimately, an expression of the valorisation of all things as means and ends. In opposition to this instrumentalism, they strongly emphasise the anti-instrumentalising and resistant force of aesthetic experience.

²¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 39.

The ‘culture industry’ notion that commercialised culture distracts from authentic experience is shared by I.A. Richards’s theory of ‘stock responses’ as it was developed by the *Scrutiny* movement. Both theories focus on the industrialisation of culture through advertising and the commercialisation of mass culture, and agree that this tendency homogenises the psychology of the masses to the disadvantage of ‘genuine’ culture and ‘genuine’ life. F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis’s liberal humanist accounts focused on the debasement of genuine culture through the spread of technology and its facile *appeal* to the masses, whilst the Frankfurt School found capitalism and instrumental reason to be the cause of the industrialisation of culture, governing what can be expressed in it and how. Titles such as F.R. Leavis’ *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* reflects a key opposition in the Cambridge account between a cultured elite and the corrupted masses it was urged to rescue. The Frankfurt School perspective, however, deliberately avoided use of the term ‘mass culture’, in order to avoid the risk of placing responsibility with the masses for their manipulation by the culture industry.²² Where the Cambridge and Frankfurt School models for explaining the industrialisation and commercialisation of culture are most divergent is in their distinct notions of what is at stake in this process. Importantly, the two models share the idea that art and literature can remedy this deplorable situation – but they don’t agree on what the situation actually is. For the *Scrutiny* movement what is at stake is the loss of a quasi-romantic communitarian ideal. Adorno and Horkheimer’s Marxist point of view is in some respects quite opposed to that idealisation of the past and the ‘organic community’, as their kind of Marxism wants to produce something entirely new. Yet both see in literature and art an anti-instrumental power which can fight off the instrumentalised uniformity which is either destroying the past or preventing the celebrated future. Both theories agree, moreover, that the change effected in the psychology of mass audiences through the industrialisation of the cultural sphere brings about conditioned habitual thinking. The stock response, a concept which I will return to in chapter four, is a description of this kind of habitual thinking. The theory of the culture industry, too, describes a situation in which responses become habituated through the commodification of human hopes and dreams: ‘man’s attempt to make himself a proficient apparatus, similar (even in emotions) to the model served up by the culture industry’.²³

Considering its commercialised, instrumental, and predictable treatment of literature, it is clear that the study guide is implicated in the theories of the culture industry and stock

²² Roger Behrens, *Kritische Theorie* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 68.

²³ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), 167.

responses, thus confirming certain apprehensions that preceded the full development of neoliberalism. Importantly, however, the study guide also allows insight into the more contemporary status of this process of instrumentalisation, as prefigured by these theories, by showing us that neoliberal ideology, too, exerts its influence at the level of individual subjectivity. The thought of Adorno and Horkheimer is especially central in this connection because they assert that instrumental reason actively conditions the thinking of mass audiences, at the level of the subject, for the purposes of consumer capitalism. As I will go on to show, it is precisely by shaping ideas and habituating responses in individual learners that the neoliberal study guide comes to affect, confirm, and reflect instrumentally informed ideas about the value and purpose of literary study in educational institutions.

Literature study guides and the work ethic of the neoliberal subject

As demonstrated through the examples of the theories of the culture industry and stock responses, neoliberalism is but one manifestation of an ongoing process of instrumental rationalisation. From the very earliest sociological studies of capitalism there exists a notion of its accompanying work ethic. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) Max Weber explores the notion that capitalism needs a moral component to facilitate the necessary existential investment in the social system. Effective participation in neoliberal society, too, requires people to think in a certain way about society and their own role therein, and this need is made especially obvious through the neoliberal educational discourse which characterises the instrumental work ethic promoted by the study guide. The hegemonic status of neoliberal discourse conditions those ‘stock responses’ of today which pertain to, and habituate, ideas about individual responsibilities and competition in the neoliberal subject.

We might use the term ‘neoliberal ethos’ to refer to the work ethic of the neoliberal subject. I am especially interested in the pressures placed by this ethos on individuals towards responsibility for their own life development as a form of calculated entrepreneurial activity – in other words, for their ‘human capital’. When young people utilise the study guide and its targeted approach as an instrument for the attainment of higher examination results, they are conceivably responding to precisely these kinds of pressures. The study guide both responds to, and participates in fostering, a neoliberal work ethic.

Ulrich Beck, a key theorist on ‘individualisation’ in neoliberal and Third Way theory, describes the individual as the ‘centre of action, [...] the planning office [...] [of] his/her own biography’.²⁴ The inequalities of twentieth-century modernity, such as race, class and

²⁴ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (London: Sage, 1992), 135.

gender are faced and overcome by the neoliberal subject through what Beck refers to as ‘biographical solutions to systemic contradictions’, understood as individual risks and opportunities.²⁵ Individuals must make ‘the kind of suitable “choices” that will enable them to become flexible, entrepreneurial, economic subjects’.²⁶ Michael Peters describes this process as a ‘responsibilising of the self’, and casts it as ‘one of the distinctive means of neo-liberal governance of welfare and education’ which surfaced as part of the rise of enterprise culture in education during the Thatcher years.²⁷ During this period and the subsequent conservative and New Labour governments, the state began a process of disentangling itself from the traditional responsibilities of the welfare state, which was made possible through the ‘twin strategies of a greater individualisation of society and the responsibilisation of individuals and families’.²⁸ It is the relationship, encouraged by neoliberal discourse, one cultivates with *oneself*, ‘through forms of personal investment (for example, user charges, student loans) and insurance that becomes the central ethical component of a new individualised and privatised consumer welfare economy’.²⁹ Under this privatised welfare regime, individuals must apply ‘certain management, economic, and actuarial techniques to themselves’.³⁰ The duty towards responsibilising the self is both economic and moral, and comes to determine investment decisions pertaining to one’s ‘health, education, security, employability, and retirement’.³¹ Such decisions involve a ‘risk-based targeting of services and the shift from an emphasis on a relationship based on professional authority (therapist, counsellor, etc.), to an emphasis on self-empowerment and self-help based on training, education, and the development of “personal skills”’.³² The study guide user looks to self-study technologies in a bid to manage some of the responsibilities imposed on her concerning education and related concerns such as future employability and financial security. In participating in this instrumental logic, the study guide – as a manifestation of this neoliberal

²⁵ Ulrich Beck, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2002), xxii.

²⁶ Francis et al., *Identities and Practices*, 27.

²⁷ Michael Peters, ‘Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self: A Foucauldian Perspective’, *Journal of Educational Inquiry* 2, No. 2 (2001): 58.

²⁸ Peters, ‘Education’, 59.

²⁹ Peters, ‘Education’, 60.

³⁰ Peters, ‘Education’, 60.

³¹ Peters, ‘Education’, 61.

³² Peters, ‘Education’, 62.

work ethic in the educational sphere – not only imports an instrumentalised model of study into literary education, but in so doing, it also brings the forms of this instrumentalisation into direct conflict with the substance of literary education. Here, neoliberal ideology not only challenges the *economic value* of literary study, but also comes to challenge what literary study actually *is*; its ideals, values, identities, and importantly, its methods. This collision of the neoliberal ethos with the values and practices of the discipline of English, as well as with humanities education more broadly, will be discussed below, subsequent to the present consideration of key ways in which the neoliberal ethos finds expression in the study guide.

David Hursh describes the shaping of the neoliberal subject in the education system and the cultivation of the neoliberal work ethic:

Education, from preschool through the post-secondary level, is increasingly reshaped into competitive markets where students are to be assessed via standardized tests with the goal of creating entrepreneurial individuals who will be economically productive members of society, responsible only for her or him self. Neoliberal societies aim to create instrumentally rational individuals who can compete in the marketplace.³³

The element of competition referred to by Hursh is one which is very much present in the rhetoric, form and function of the study guide, which focuses on improving exam results for individual students. Thus, the study guide's focus on competition and improvement has come to reproduce a neoliberalised education system in which the neoliberal work ethic flourishes. Neoliberal thinking paints the individual student as a consumer in a competitive educational market. This idea is reflected in the competitive marketing of study guide series for the attention of the student-consumer. This competitive marketing is especially noticeable in American series: In 1964, US series *Monarch Notes* claimed to be 'The Most Comprehensive Series of Its Kind Ever Published'³⁴. In the eighties, fellow US series *Barron's Book Notes* laid claim to 'livelier writing, more up-to-date commentary than any other series', and sought to set themselves apart as the 'only book notes with multiple-choice and essay tests',³⁵ whilst US series *Max Notes* later claimed to be quicker and more effective than any other study guide.³⁶ Slightly differently, UK study guide series have tended to be

³³ David Hursh, 'Rethinking Schools and Society/Combating Neoliberal Globalization', in Kumar (ed.), *Education and the Reproduction of Capital*, 101.

³⁴ Robert Ackerman, *Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Monarch Notes and Study Guides*, ed. Stanley Cooperman, Charles Leavitt and Unicio J. Violi (New York: Thor Publications, 1964), n.pag.

³⁵ Sharon Linnea, *Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler*, *Barron's Book Notes*, ed Murray Bromberg (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1985), n.pag.

³⁶ Oliver Conant, *Charles Dickens' Hard Times* (Piscataway, NJ: Research and Education Foundation, 1996), iii.

marketed through a form of commercialism which involves an appeal to the authority of high culture. *Methuen Study-Aids* of the late 1970s feature as part of its cover design a tiny cartoon version of William Shakespeare and an emanating speech bubble which, in mock antiquated calligraphy, states that *Methuen Study-Aids* are the ‘finest aids to literature revision’.³⁷ The figure of Shakespeare – the ultimate symbol of English literature and British culture – is used to invoke ‘timeless’ and universal cultural values, which, when coupled with the competitive market logic of the speech bubble, aptly illustrates the complex and problematic way in which instrumentality and ‘disinterested’ cultural values are interwoven within the literature study guide as well as in the educational policy it reproduces. In chapter five’s discussion of the National Curriculum, we will return to the way such commercialised appeals to high culture in the self-advertising of UK study guides anticipate a particular combination of neoliberalism and cultural conservatism which came to expression in educational policy during the Thatcher and subsequent Major and Blair governments.³⁸

The neoliberal work ethic finds its most prominent expression, moreover, in the study guide’s very function: The study guide promotes both self-improvement *and* competition between individual students. The ‘*better grades*’ of the *Spark Notes* advert has two implications – the improvement of one’s own grades over time and the improvement of one’s own grades in relation to those of one’s peers. So, once the study guide has been purchased by students as a tool for improving examination results, the promised differential potential depends on the success of the individual student’s use of that tool in the project of excelling relative to her peers within a competitive economy of assessment. By internalising the protocols of the study guide, the student can anticipate part of the educational process – a process which, in the context of the study guide’s function, is understood primarily in terms of instrumental assessment. In this way, the study guide’s functional reliance upon the individual’s internalisation of the neoliberal ethos is, as we shall see, an expression of the internal logic of what study guides are, in fact, offering consumers.

Crucially, the neoliberal ethos holds the individual student responsible both for her successes and failures within the competitive economy of assessment.³⁹ The combination of neoliberalism and conservatism in 1980s and 1990s educational policy produced a heightened attention to standardised testing and league-table thinking – characterised not

³⁷ Valerie L. Barnish, *Notes on Hardy’s Jude the Obscure*, Methuen Study-Aids (London : Methuen Paperbacks, 1977), n.pag.

³⁸ Geoff Whitty, ‘Twenty Years of Progress? English Educational Policy 1988 to the Present’, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 36, no. 2 (2008): 165-69.

³⁹ Francis et al., *Identities and Practices*, 28.

just by an emphasis on individual responsibility, but also on government responsibilities towards ‘testing, auditing and surveillance’ to ensure that individuals make the ‘right’ choices.⁴⁰ This focus on students’ performance in tests and the pressures on individual students to make specific choices foregrounds the perceived importance of competition both between individual students and between schools within an educational marketplace.⁴¹ For over a hundred years the main concern of education has been that students perform well in order to gain entry to certain professions or study programmes. However, ‘the political background context has shifted radically with a move away from the assumption that schools are doing all they can to enable children to reach their highest potential to one that implicitly views schools as not always trying hard enough and needing to be made accountable when pupils fail to “attain” the prescribed grades in examinations’.⁴² Neoliberal discourse portrays public institutions and bureaucracies as biased and inefficient, and the public sector is discredited to such an extent that teachers have been claimed to possess an insufficient knowledge of industry, thus hindering efficiency.⁴³ This kind of instrumentalism, which is supported by and reflected in the study guide’s function, conflicts, of course, with the larger concepts and ideals of education to which many teachers and schools aspire. The study guide, as a seemingly pure and distilled form of that instrumentalism, offers increased efficiency in the study process by cutting through the intermediary pedagogy and cutting out its values; in short, by offering a shortcut. The individual study guide consumer can choose between different brands of such ‘quick fixes’ which are thought to rival school tuition by cutting straight to the perceived ‘point’ of pedagogy: getting the desired exam results. Moreover, when the student is posed as consumer in this way, she is made responsible for her investments in her own ‘human capital’. The responsibility entailed by this scenario is at the heart of the neoliberal ethos which I am describing.

In the UK study guide series *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* the influence of neoliberal political rationality is palpable, and the series is an apt example of how the neoliberal ethos conditions ideas about the value of education in terms of strategic

⁴⁰ Francis et al., *Identities and Practices*, 27. See also Geoff Whitty, Sally Power and David Halpin, *Devolution and Choice in Education* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998); Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Dave Hill, ‘State Theory and the Neo-Liberal Reconstruction of Schooling and Teacher Education: a Structuralist Neo-Marxist Critique of Postmodernist, Quasi-Postmodernist, and Cultural Neo-Marxist Theory’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 22, no. 1 (2001); Stephen Ball, *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage*. (London: Routledge Falmer, 2003).

⁴¹ Francis et al., *Identities and Practices*, 27.

⁴² Francis et al., *Identities and Practices*, 13.

⁴³ Levidow, ‘Neoliberal Agendas’, 159.

‘investments’ in the student’s future possibilities. The title of the series both invites and commands the individual student to take charge of her own education. It promises to show you how to ‘get an A in English’, a forthright declaration of its instrumental and competitive approach to quantifiable results. The series also claims to use the rationalising strategy of ‘the latest scientific knowledge’, with its sanitising ‘absence’ of ideology, to maximise efficiency: ‘to show you how you can work faster, shorten your study time and still get a higher grade’.⁴⁴ On top of this, the overall impression of the influence of neoliberal discourse is fortified by a distinct absence of the intention to help enrich the student’s understanding of English literature. As such, this series is still more affected by instrumental rationality than other similar series. As we shall see, other UK study guide series express a concern to stimulate the student’s appreciation of the literary text – if only as a means to attainment, rather than for the purposes of broader educational goals. In not even paying lip-service to the value of literary reading, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* is a particularly overt example of the neoliberal ethos in study guides. As such, it serves to illustrate the way in which the propagation of a neoliberal ethos amongst students of English literature is achieved both in the instrumentalising rhetoric of the guides’ marketing, and in the instrumentality of the student’s relation to her study of literature assumed by this rhetoric. For the discipline, this situation is serious because the neoliberal ethos impacts on both the point and practice of literary study by challenging the core values of the discipline: at the limit, the instrumentalism expressed in the study guide makes the actual subject matter of study entirely arbitrary.

Literature study guides and pop-psychology self-help manuals: technologies of governing

The Foucauldian concept of rational governmentality provides a useful approach to understanding how the neoliberal ethos achieves its hegemonic status and manages to infiltrate spheres extrinsic to the economic.⁴⁵ Foucault’s emphasis on *mentality* in governing highlights his contention that power and ideas are not separate phenomena.⁴⁶ Neoliberalism

⁴⁴ Steve Eddy and Tony Buzan, *A Guide to Far From the Madding Crowd Thomas Hardy*, Teach Yourself Literature Guides (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), n.pag.

⁴⁵ The concept remains fragmentary in Foucault’s work, but has been developed usefully in the field of cultural studies. See especially the work of Nikolas Rose and Colin Gordon.

⁴⁶ Wendy Brown, ‘Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy’, *Theory and Event* 7, no. 1 (autumn 2003). See also Colin Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality: An Introduction’, in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

requires both government and *self-government*, and the close relationship between these two kinds of governing reveals that neoliberalism, with its destabilising of the welfare state and its redescription of welfare as a set of individualised responsibilities, relies on the perpetuation of neoliberal discourse in the social sphere through the attitudes of individuals towards individualised duties. In other words, neoliberalism governs both from above *and* from within the habituated thinking of individuals. In this respect, the concept of rational governmentality relates to Adorno and Horkheimer's culture industry through the shared premise that instrumental forms of capitalism exert their influence, to a large degree, through the habituation of ideas at the level of the individual subject. Regarding the relative proximity of government power and the participation of individuals, Foucault writes:

I don't think that we should consider the 'modern state' as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary as a very sophisticated structure in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns.⁴⁷

The set of 'specific patterns' of neoliberal political rationality, writes Wendy Brown, 'involves a specific and consequential organization of the social, the subject and the state'.⁴⁸ It is based on a conception of the market, and its 'organization of governance and the social is not merely the result of leakage from the economic to other spheres but rather of the explicit imposition of a particular form of market rationality on these spheres'.⁴⁹ When imposed on previously extrinsic spheres, such as the social, the cultural, and the subjective, this rationality governs what can be expressed within them: 'as Foucault inflected the term, a political rationality is a specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship. A political rationality governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria of these domains'.⁵⁰

Foucauldian analysis around the concept of governmentality has been usefully developed by Nikolas Rose, for whom political power works through the shaping of subjectivity.⁵¹ He writes: 'Thoughts, feelings and actions may appear as the very fabric and constitution of the intimate self, but they are socially organised and managed in minute

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault 'The Subject and Power', in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Brighton: Harvester, 1982) 214. Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Books, 1999) 1.

⁴⁸ Wendy Brown, 'American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization', *Political Theory* 34, no. 8 (December 2006): 693.

⁴⁹ Brown, 'American Nightmare', 693.

⁵⁰ Brown, 'American Nightmare', 693.

⁵¹ Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 151.

particulars'.⁵² The conception of 'the conduct of conduct' describes the 'invention of an array of technologies that connect up calculations from political centres to thousands of micro-locales where conduct is shaped'.⁵³ Understood as an array of technologies of government, governmentality 'is to be analyzed in terms of the strategies, techniques and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered'.⁵⁴ Crucially, such technologies do not impose or implement an 'idealised schema in the real by an act of will'.⁵⁵ In other words, they do not seek to govern from above through 'society', but through 'the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfilment'.⁵⁶ The regulation of subjective capacities is especially noticeable, says Rose, in 'the complex apparatus targeted upon the child', encompassing schools and education.⁵⁷

Rose's analyses of governmentality, however, have focused mainly on strategies of governing within the field of psychological well-being. His work has influenced a growing field of Foucauldian analysis specialising in pop-psychological self-help literature, which understands the self-help book as a technology of governing within a neoliberal paradigm.⁵⁸ A productive analogy can be constructed between self-help literature and study guides, within a Foucauldian perspective. Self-help literature is understood as a project of regulating norms of individualism and self-management in terms of neoliberal configurations of power and authority. This is made possible through the co-mingling of government and self-

⁵² Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Books, 1999), 1.

⁵³ Rose, *Governing the Soul*, xxi.

⁵⁴ Nikolas Rose, 'Governing "Advanced" Liberal Democracies', in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, ed. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 42.

⁵⁵ Rose, 'Governing "Advanced" Liberal Democracies', 42.

⁵⁶ Rose, 'Governing "Advanced" Liberal Democracies', 41.

⁵⁷ Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 2.

⁵⁸ See Heidi Marie Rimke, 'Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature', *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000); Rebecca Hazleden, 'Love Yourself: The Relationship of the Self with Itself in Popular Self-Help Texts', *The Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 4 (2003); Sabine Maasen, 'Governing by Will: The Shaping of the Will in Self-Help Manuals', in *Psychology's Territories: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives From Different Disciplines*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and Thomas Sturm (London: Lawrence Erlbaum: 2007); Sabine Maasen, Barbara Sutter and Stefanie Duttweiler: 'Self-Help: The Making of Neosocial Selves in Neoliberal Society' in *On Willing Selves: Neoliberal Politics vis-à-vis the Neuroscientific Challenge*, ed. Maasen and Sutter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Brigid Philip, 'Analysing the Politics of Self-Help Books on Depression', *Journal of Sociology*, no. 45 (2009).

government, conceived of by Foucault as concerning ‘the encounter between technologies of power (action that is exercised over others) and technologies of the self (actions that an individual exercises upon him or herself)’.⁵⁹ Heidi Marie Rimke sees the production of self-help books as ‘an effect of discourse naturalizing itself and thereby rendering psychological subjects as natural self-governing objects’.⁶⁰ Like the study guide, the self-help book is a form of governmental technology which presupposes the responsabilising and individualising of the self: ‘Popular cultural discourses contribute to the idea that individuals are calculable and uniform entities, capable of being held responsible for their social conduct and experience in the world’.⁶¹ Whilst the self-help book actualises this model of the individual in its topic in a way that the study guide does not, the study guide involves a comparable attitude in its emphasis on competition and individual literary interpretation within the defined range of acceptable interpretations determined by assessment. In its role as tool for ‘investments’ in ‘human capital’, the study guide thus operates beyond the remit of what more traditional pedagogical discourse has typically tended to imply. In the self-help manual, an emphasis on scientific accuracy and standardised tests links the manual’s function at the level of individual subjectivity with technologies of power by establishing an authority for making normalising and objectifying judgements about subjects.⁶² In this way, self-help literature both governs and is governed by what is sayable within neoliberal ideology, presenting individual change as possible and desirable, and consequently rendering social and collective change outside the remit of the achievable.⁶³ This simultaneous active governing and passive ‘being governed by’ is reflected in the self-help manual’s function: users actively and voluntarily seek out the manual as a form of technology of the self which is inseparable from the technologies of power. Similarly, the study guide’s function, at the level of the individual student, is premised on its contact with examination boards, or in other words, the institutions of power. Because of its contingent relationship to assessment, the study guide aptly, and perhaps still more solidly than the self-help manual, expresses the tight connection between its own role as part of the technologies of power and as a technology of the self.

⁵⁹ Philip, ‘Self-Help Books’, 155.

⁶⁰ Rimke, ‘Self-Help Literature’, 62.

⁶¹ Rimke, ‘Self-Help Literature’, 68.

⁶² Philip, ‘Self-Help Books’, 157-59.

⁶³ Nina Björk, *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar: Om pengar och människors värde* [Happily Ever After: On the Value of Money and People], (Stockholm: Wahlström Widstrand, 2012), 129.

As *Brodie's Notes* had it in 1966, their study guides are 'written by teachers and examiners with a wealth of experience. They are designed to provide reliable and authoritative guidance on all commonly set texts'.⁶⁴ In this emphasis on pedagogical authority via an appeal to the expertise of the writer, however, the genre is neither exclusive nor unusual. However, when coupled with appeals to authority on what *York Notes* describe as the A-level student's 'specific needs',⁶⁵ the study guide diverges from the critical text in its capacity as a technology of power. This impression of the study guide's seemingly objective and 'scientific' authority on the needs of the individual is often emphasised, moreover, through a curious withholding of the names of study guide writers from the front of publications; in some cases the writer's name is not given at all. This withdrawal of the writer's name actually serves to strengthen the sense of the guide's authority through a foregrounding of its effective formula, lending it a sense of a view from everywhere and nowhere. I use the word 'writer' rather than 'author' to refer to those who write study guides because the study guide, in seeking to be authoritative, positions itself as singularly uncontentious, and hence unauthored. In Foucault's formulation, '[t]exts, books, and discourses really began to have authors [...] to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive'.⁶⁶ When a study guide lacks Foucault's author function, this forfeits its status as a critical text but foregrounds its 'self-help' function. In other words, it shows that the study guide seeks to position itself outside of discursive argumentation. Thus situated, the study guide's 'objectivity' is used to authorise its formulaic format. Hence, some series can offer study questions *as well as corresponding answers*, where the student's 'answers should be written down and then checked with the correct list at the end of this Section'.⁶⁷

However, in order to lend its authority a kind of 'moral' legitimacy, the study guide must avoid the accusation that it can replace a reading of the original literary text: 'It is important to remember that the Notes serve only as an aid for the study of the book and do not in any way relieve the student of the necessity of reading the original text';⁶⁸ 'The student

⁶⁴ Norman T. Carrington, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Pan Study Aids (London: Pan Books, 1966), n.pag.

⁶⁵ Hena Maes-Jelinek, *York Notes on Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, York Notes Advanced, ed. Martin Gray and A. N. Jeffares (Harlow: Longman/York Press, 2000), n.pag.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', trans. Josué V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 108.

⁶⁷ *Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*, Methuen Notes Study Aids (London: Methuen Paperbacks, 1978), 55.

⁶⁸ *Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*, n.pag.

must remember that the Hardy text is his first and closest priority, and that these Notes are in no way intended as a substitute for, but only as a complement to, Hardy's novel',⁶⁹ '[*Methuen Study-Aids*] are designed only as an aid to the Student in his own reading of the book for examination purposes',⁷⁰ etc. *York Notes* in its 1990s and onwards configuration, likewise, give an introduction entitled 'How to Study a Novel', which indicates that the study guide should not be the primary means of study. This repeated caveat is, in fact, so common in study guides that it must be viewed as a genre characteristic. As such, the caveat seems to signal a peculiarly mixed message: it appears to be given not only to position 'objective' authority in an instrumental bid for exam success, but also to 'increase your understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of literature and [...] encourage personal response';⁷¹ to 'stimulate *your own* thinking';⁷² 'to stimulate independent critical appraisal of the text being studied';⁷³ to 'help the reader to think independently about the text being studied'.⁷⁴ The study guide, in fact, relatively rarely imposes its technologies overtly as an act of will, as in the example of the study questions with corresponding 'correct' answers. Like the self-help manual, it is a complex technology which provides the regulated freedom to govern one's own subjective responses. This logic, then, is what reconciles the apparent contradiction between the study guide's rhetoric of instrumentality and the 'moral' priority of engagement with the literary text: for the study guide, the value of that literary engagement does not exceed its instrumental goals, but constitutes the route to their more successful attainment. Hence, the study guide's insistence that the student should not become dependent upon it, and instead develop 'critical thinking', can be seen as part of this regulated freedom, where 'your own thinking' comes to represent an internalisation of the protocols of the study guide. And, for the study guide, such internalisations entail an individualised responsibility for the

⁶⁹ I. L. Baker, *Notes on Hardy Far From the Madding Crowd*, Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (Bath: James Brodie Ltd, 1964), 7.

⁷⁰ *Notes on Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream*, Methuen's Study Aids (London: Methuen, 1966), n.pag.

⁷¹ Graham Handley, *Brodie's Notes on Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy*, Brodie's Notes, ed. Graham Handley (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), n.pag.

⁷² I. L. Baker, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*, Pan Study Aids/Brodie's Notes (London: Pan Books, 1976), n.pag.

⁷³ I. L. Baker, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*, Brodie's Notes, ed. Graham Handley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), n.pag.

⁷⁴ Elisabeth Brewer, *York Notes on The Miller's Tale Geoffrey Chaucer*, York Notes, ed. A. N. Jeffares and Suheil Bushrui (Harlow: Longman/York Press, 1982), n.pag.

student's own learning, which is precisely why the guide's 'moral' legitimacy is tied to insisting on the student's independence.⁷⁵

Liberal humanism in the study guide

As noted above, Rose has commented that pedagogy is the most prominent way in which neoliberalism carries out its shaping of subjectivity.⁷⁶ And, indeed, the subtle continuity between the study guide's roles as a technology of the self and as participant in the technologies of power is likely to generate unease about the project of pedagogy in general. That continuity, furthermore, reminds us of the problematic tension internal to humanist pedagogy, described above, where the instrumentalism of any education is at odds with the ideal of disinterested literary appreciation. Despite the apparent distance between this concern about disinterest and the study guide's highly interested approach, the study guide, too, has internalised that humanist tension. Although it has, indeed, come to responsabilise students through the promotion of the neoliberal ethos as a technology of power in its appeal to systems of assessment, this, crucially, is not the only impulse behind the study guide's appeal to critical thinking. In its capacity as a complex technology of the self, the study guide *serves two separate masters*. So, in its emphasis on critical thinking, the study guide starts to differ radically from the self-help manual: for, in the study guide, the neoliberal ethos is rivalled and challenged internally by an opposing allegiance to a strong liberal humanist aesthetic tradition.

Conceived of as a technology of neoliberal governmentality, the literature study guide is much more interesting than the self-help manual precisely because it refuses to be understood purely as this. The *types* of aspirations and self-fulfilment promoted by this particular technology of the self are both dual and conflicted. The pedagogy of the study guide participates both in instrumental ideology *and* in the cultivation of a set of liberal humanist values which are supposedly disinterested. As such, the literature study guide appears as a hybrid between the school textbook and the self-help manual. That it expressly encourages critical thinking and aesthetic experience is made obvious in this particularly overt example:

⁷⁵ This ideal neoliberal study guide reader resembles the ideal neoliberal academic described by Rosalind Gill: 'academics [...] appear [...] to be model neoliberal subjects whose working practices and "psychic habitus" [...] constitute us as self-regulating, calculating, conscientious and responsabilised'. (Rosalind Gill, 'Breaking the Silence: The Hidden Injuries of Neoliberal Academia', in *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*, ed. Róisín Ryan-Flood and Rosalind Gill [London: Routledge, 2009], 11).

⁷⁶ Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 2.

[M]ake [the experience of Hardy's poems] your own experiences, and not the conveniently adopted views of a critic or teacher. The notes on each poem are a guide to appreciation. If a poem is read with sensitivity and imagination, with insight and discipline, much more than the Notes tell will be discovered, and the experience will be at first hand, which all experience in literature should be. Perhaps the reader will find himself disagreeing with a particular emphasis or even an interpretation in the Notes. This, unless it results from obstinacy or a lack of self-discipline, is a healthy sign, for it marks the beginnings of critical awareness. And once this awareness establishes itself in the mind, confident and balanced judgements will be made; in fact, the art of appreciation will have been learnt.⁷⁷

This citation reveals a decidedly humanist impulse. The emphasis on independent appreciation is connected with a humanist mode of pedagogy which holds that disinterest and critical thought is a natural consequence of immediate aesthetic experience. Characterised by 'sensitivity and imagination', aesthetic experience leads to the making of 'confident and balanced judgements'. The same publication displays, for the study guide genre, an extraordinary anti-instrumentalism: '[t]hese notes have not been burdened with too many technical references, since there is a danger that to speak of "similes and metaphors", for example, will give the reader the impression that he is "appreciating" the poem concerned'.⁷⁸ However, because the reader's act of appreciation is being implicitly overseen by an examiner, and the study guide's overall function is decidedly instrumental, this seemingly anti-instrumental statement – like the caveats cited above – comes to illustrate the curious co-mingling of the rhetorics of instrumentality and disinterest in study guides. In this co-mingled state, liberal humanism, whilst it represents the primary influence on the study guide's literary pronouncements, remains secondary to the structural force of the study guide's instrumental function.

With the following quotation, we begin to understand the extent to which, within the study guide, the ideal of disinterested humanism operates – despite its antagonism to instrumentality – as a means that ultimately serves the study guide's overall utilitarian purpose: 'If you know your text and know what it is saying about life, and how it says it, then you will enjoy it, and there is no better way of passing an examination in literature'.⁷⁹ This statement is clearly humanist in its focus on the text's announcements about human life, and in its concern with the student's experience of aesthetic enjoyment. Here, the independence of the reader becomes more than a 'moral' imperative to 'take responsibility' for her own learning as a strategic investment in economic success. However, this humanist statement seems to recognise that the main objective is 'the passing of an examination in

⁷⁷ Graham Handley, *Brodie's Notes on Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy*, Brodie's Notes/Pan Study Aids (London: Pan Books, 1978), 7.

⁷⁸ Handley, *Brodie's Notes on Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy*, 8.

⁷⁹ Raymond Wilson, *Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*, Macmillan Master Guides, ed. James Gibson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), vii.

literature’, and that enjoyable aesthetic or literary experience is but the best way of achieving this. The statement appears to indicate that disinterest is a means to an end which is external to disinterest itself, namely the passing of the literature examination. In this way, the study guide offers disinterest a pedagogical function which brings out and externalises an inherent instrumentality in humanist pedagogy. And on a slightly different, but related, reading of the statement, one could go so far as to call it a happy coincidence that instrumental goals can be achieved by way of something that is good in itself, namely literary appreciation. For had this not been the case, literary appreciation would no longer be considered good in itself, but rather a distraction from the rationalising instrumental purpose that it serves. In this scenario, worryingly, the ‘moral’ legitimacy of literary study itself becomes contingent upon its instrumental value.

‘Interested disinterest’ in humanist pedagogy: the humanities debate

As a manifestation of the problematic clash between instrumental reason and the disinterested ideal, where the neoliberal ethos puts disinterest at a disadvantage, the study guide provides a useful vantage point for discussing the place and value of the humanities in an education system marked by pragmatic neoliberal concerns. As indicated above, this conflict is complicated by what we might describe as an interested form of disinterest: a related conflict which operates within liberal humanism between the ideal of disinterest and the practical nature of its pedagogical dissemination. Owing much to Arnold and the liberal humanist tradition of aesthetic education, Martha Nussbaum and others who embrace what Helen Small refers to as the ‘Democracy Needs Us’ argument,⁸⁰ claim that, for the good of society, the disinterestedness of culture needs to be utilised as a defence against consumer-capitalist values; that the value of culture, despite its disinterestedness, lies in its engagement with moral and social questions.⁸¹ Nussbaum’s defence of the arts and humanities, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), thus gives an instrumental reason for the importance of these disciplines. As a counterweight to the narrow focus on short-term economic profit, she promotes the education of responsible democratic global citizens through the disinterested and critical values of the arts and humanities. Nussbaum writes: ‘With the rush to profitability in the global market, values precious to the future of democracy, especially in an era of religious and economic anxiety, are in danger of getting

⁸⁰ Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125-50.

⁸¹ Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010).

lost'.⁸² Amongst these values, which are 'infused with what we might call the spirit of the humanities' she lists 'the ability to think critically' and 'the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person'.⁸³ The abilities of empathy and critical thinking are viewed as crucial to the functioning of any local or global democracy. Here, we encounter disinterested values in a sort of pragmatic and interested bid for a broader and more human political focus than that which neoliberalism allows. This is an expression of an inherent instrumentality in the humanist discourse which is nowhere more prevalent than in liberal humanist notions of aesthetic education that can be traced to Arnold's profound influence. Arnold inherits the notion from its German Enlightenment proponents – Schiller, Herder, and Winckelmann. The tradition holds that instruction in art and literature can bring about real changes in society. Chapter three of this thesis is dedicated to contextualising the literature study guide in relation to Arnold's conception of literature and culture as socially redemptive. Chapter four situates the study guide in relation to the heavily Arnoldian movement which Chris Baldick describes as the 'social mission' of English criticism,⁸⁴ with a particular focus on the work of F.R. Leavis, Q.D. Leavis and I.A. Richards. In those chapters, I describe the development of the study guide in relation to the uneasy territory between disinterest and institutional pedagogy when literature is utilised as an instrument of civilising power. However, this somewhat unclean binary between interested instrumentality and disinterested liberal humanism also underpins much contemporary debate about the humanities and neoliberalism.

Considering the pragmatic nature of such humanist projects, it now starts to look as though the presence of instrumental rationality within the study guide is somehow prefigured by an instrumentality which seemingly results from liberal humanism's application of the disinterested ideal itself. In liberal humanism's project of circulating disinterested values via pedagogy, a contradiction arises in which those values become instrumentalised and interested – thus opening the doors to more rationalising forms of instrumentality, such as neoliberalism. As an example of this process, the study guide reveals how, on one level, this happens as a result of humanism's own relation to institutional education and systems of assessment. On another level, the contradiction is connected with the humanist form of aspiration promoted by the study guide as a form of social engineering: the values invoked by the concept of disinterest are instrumental because they perceive disinterested aesthetic experience to be a means of humanising and democratising power. Here, we begin to be able

⁸² Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 6.

⁸³ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 7.

⁸⁴ See Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

to conceive of the study guide *not just* as participant in neoliberal ideology, promoting individualism, competition, and social inequality: for, in trading off individual instrumentalism against humanist instrumentalism, much as humanism itself trades off instrumentalism against disinterest, the study guide can also be seen as an instrument of resistance to social inequality based on liberal humanist conceptions of the democratising properties of aesthetic education.

Hence, the vantage point of the literature study guide, with its internal contradictions, makes the division between disinterested culture and interested educational policy especially acute; yet, it does this precisely by forcing us to engage with the *necessity* of something like a consideration of impact in the transition from an humanistic ideal to the practicalities of its pedagogical dissemination, opening a space for reflection upon whether this apparent division is ultimately meaningful or sustainable. I use the word impact here to describe the practical effect of the translation of a theoretical ideal of disinterest into practice. However, the word has been chosen to serve the additional function of alluding to the much debated ‘impact agenda’ of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). In this context, ‘impact’ represents an instrumentalism which is very far removed from the ideal of disinterest.⁸⁵ This instrumentality, which is external to the discipline of English, throws the tension between disinterest and instrumentality into sharp relief. In consequence, the debate about the challenges posed by this kind of politics for English literary studies tends in part to obscure the less apparent tension between disinterest and the necessarily instrumental character of pedagogy that exists *within* the discipline. The study guide, however – which casts light on this tension *internal* to the discipline – provides an apt point of departure for the broader discussion about the place and value of English studies – as well as of comparable humanities disciplines – within an education system increasingly governed by neoliberal and utilitarian values.

The work of applying the study guide’s dilemma more directly to the broader context of the humanities debate will be carried out in the conclusion of this thesis. However, that discussion is briefly foreshadowed here in order to demonstrate the study guide’s potential to show, both as symptom of and metaphor for these larger conflicts, that in defending the humanities against neoliberal education policy, we should beware of overly polarised

⁸⁵ The REF allocates 20 per cent of its university department ratings to the demonstration of ‘impact’, i.e. achieving ‘demonstrable benefits to the wider economy and society’, not including ‘intellectual influence’ or the outcomes of teaching. *Research Excellence Framework: Second Consultation on the Assessment and Funding of Research* (London: HEFCE, 2009), 13-14. Collini comments that unless the REF guidelines are changed, UK university scholars will be forced to become ‘door-to-door salesmen for vulgarized versions of their increasingly market-oriented “products”’ (Collini, *Universities*, 177).

conceptions of the useful and the useless.⁸⁶ The call for impact and utility often leads to such overemphases, prompting a defensive return to exaggerated liberal humanist ideals – risking overstatement and consequent misconceptions. It seems outmoded that the humanities, characterised by constant critical revision and rethinking of dogma, should return to metaphysical truths about Man and Art stemming from the German Enlightenment when called upon by new management to justify themselves. Collini caricatures the excessive estimation of the university and its humanising impulse: ‘the same excess lurks in even the best-intentioned defences of universities today, to the point where the sceptic begins to wonder at the implication that reflective or analytical capacities can *only* arise and survive as the result of a successful UCAS application’.⁸⁷ Collini holds that Nussbaum’s book especially comes ‘perilously close to appearing to suggest that respect for, and tolerance of, other people is only likely to be achieved by those who have taken some kind of “great books” course at college’.⁸⁸ Collini suggests that the humanities in attempting to *justify* themselves undermine the notion that human curiosity and critical activity is an end in itself. Instead of ‘trying to redescribe the value of the activity [of the humanities] in terms drawn from a different, instrumental world of discourse’, he advocates ‘holding one’s nerve’.⁸⁹ The defensiveness he warns against, however, is no doubt due to a will to protest against a very real threat from a political ideology with which humanities traditions share little. The ‘Democracy Needs Us’ argument *is* pragmatically constructed to face head on the neoliberal demand for ‘impact’, but simultaneously represents a reaction against the narrow new management definition of impact and the instrumental terms of the debate. My view is that this defensive return to an ideal of aesthetic education illustrates the desperate nature of the conflict between humanist values and instrumental reason, and crucially of humanism’s internal battle with its own interested disinterest. However, the polarisation of instrumentality and disinterest is too simple because humanities education depends on the interested activity of pedagogy. In other words, humanism is forced to involve itself in the messy business of institutionalisation and socialisation. This is where we encounter something within the literary humanist ‘project’ with which the humanist educator herself is not wholly at ease, namely a need for ‘instrumentalisation’ – a minimal level of means-end rationality – as a necessary condition of the education into, and thus the perpetuation of, the very literary values that were supposedly opposed to any instrumentality. There is thus a

⁸⁶ Collini, *Universities*, 39.

⁸⁷ Collini, *Universities*, 52.

⁸⁸ Collini, *Universities*, 98.

⁸⁹ Collini, *Universities*, 85.

perpetual danger that these values will come to appear ‘debased’ by their association with ‘practical matters’, even whilst such practicalities are unavoidable. But if, in the words of Small, ‘the effect of the requirement for the humanities to justify their public value, or the terms in which they are permitted to do so, is to stifle their ability to ask the hard questions of their own intuitions of purpose and value then they really will be in trouble’.⁹⁰ The literature study guide thus provides, not only an indication of the worrying influence of neoliberal ideology upon English literary studies, but also a valuable occasion for the discipline to scrutinise its own values and intuitions.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the study guide has come to participate in the conditioning of habitual thinking in the neoliberal subject regarding her work ethic and her sense of responsibility for her own social and economic successes and failures. As such, the study guide testifies to the hegemonic spread of the neoliberal ethos into areas, such as the literary, which have previously been protected from calculation and narrowly defined conceptions of utility. Not unlike the pop-psychology self-help manual, the study guide expresses how that ideological imposition is brought about both through technologies of power and through technologies of the self. The study guide’s power is tied to its relationship to the systems of assessment, whilst as a technology of the self, it invites the individual student to internalise its instrumental methods and values. This instrumentalism, at its limit, renders literary study arbitrary, and critical thinking secondary, to the study guide’s pragmatic exercise which is focused on attainment. In encouraging the internalisation of its instrumental protocols, the study guide thus discourages thinking beyond the framework of its habituated conventions.

In its capacity as symptom – of the wider structures of assessment and educational policy, and of the ways in which neoliberal ideology, more widely, conditions instrumental thinking in accordance with narrowly defined conceptions of utility – the study guide reflects larger debates about the future of literary studies and related humanities subjects within an instrumentally informed, and indifferent, ideological framework. The study guide, thus, makes starkly apparent the effect of instrumentalised thinking upon our discipline: it indicates not only that individual students employ utilitarian attitudes in their reading of individual literary works, but it also shows us the extent of the impact of neoliberal thinking upon the discipline, both as practice and institution, by indicating the degree to which instrumentalism impacts upon the broader institutional practice of assessment.

⁹⁰ Small, *Value of the Humanities*, 21.

The study guide, however, has not decisively lost touch with the values of the discipline of English literary studies: it incorporates a current of liberal humanist aesthetic thinking. And whilst it is dominated by, and remains subordinate to, the study guide's overall instrumental function, that current also represents an internal force of resistance to the study guide's instrumentality. As a technology of the self, the literature study guide preaches *both* the entrepreneurial and responsabilised aspirations of neoliberal ideology *and* the conflicting values of disinterested literary humanism. The inherent struggle between these two sets of values, though, involves both resistance and ironic circularity, not least because their opposition is not as polar as it might seem: the interested nature of pedagogy and the pragmatics required for the codification of liberal humanist aesthetics represents an inherent anxiety in liberal humanist ideals of disinterest. Hence, the instrumental rationality of the study guide is prefigured by the problems of this literary ideal. Liberal humanism's discomfort at its own affinity with instrumentality is thus brought out and, almost brutally, externalised by the study guide's participation in neoliberalism.

Chapter 2

A Curious Complicity: The Realist Norm in Study Guides on Thomas Hardy's Novelistic Fiction

The literature study guide is both expressive of and governed by two conflicting ideological intentions. The study guide's purpose is split between the dissemination of literary values and aiding students in the instrumentally informed exercise of improving their 'human capital'. But as the previous chapter has illustrated, these two conflicting ideological ambitions – that of liberal humanist aesthetics and that of the neoliberal ethos – are not as divergent as they might at first appear. Instead, they are peculiarly co-mingled and intertwined in the study guide's pedagogical determination. As such, this curious ideological constellation within the study guide not only reflects the way that certain instrumental attitudes to education clash with literary studies, challenging and compromising both its practices and its sense of purpose and identity; the study guide's internal tension also testifies to a different, but intimately related, problem in which that identity has, in one sense, already been compromised. For insofar as the identity of the discipline of English literature is rooted in an ideal of disinterest, the very disinterestedness of that ideal comes to be challenged by the necessity of its programmatic codification for pedagogical purposes.

This chapter will continue to explore the unclear binary of interest and disinterest within the study guide. It will describe various ways in which these two ideological currents, whilst discontinuous and opposed, nonetheless share in a certain complicity. The nexus of these two conflicting ideologies is located, as the chapter will seek to expound, in the study guide's habitual adherence to what will be described as a specifically *realist* norm. This realist norm will be identified and exemplified through an analysis of a broad selection of study guides on Thomas Hardy's novelistic fiction, ranging from the inauguration of the A-level examination system in the early 1950s to around the year 2000. Hardy is chosen for this case study because his novels have been consistently popular with examination boards throughout the years, and set for A-level examination in every decade since the inception of the A-level system. Importantly, moreover, study guides on Hardy's fiction constitute a good point of departure for an exploration of the realist norm, and thus also of the ways in which that norm provides a sense of common ground for the study guide's two ideological influences. For whilst Hardy's novels can be characterised as predominantly realist, several aspects of his fiction upset the study guide's expectation of a facile cause and effect realism. Consequently, the study guide's anxious engagement with Hardy's 'non-realism' comes to

be expressed in the ubiquitous notion that his plots are unlikely and improbable. The significance of this criticism, as will be discussed towards the close of the chapter, is that the study guide relies, functionally, on the structure of the plot-summary, which, in turn, depends upon the study guide's particular conception of realism.

George Wotton and Peter Widdowson both identify the realist norm in study guides on Hardy's works as specifically liberal humanist. Moreover, their shared view is that liberal humanist aesthetics dominates the study guide genre. Thus inattentive to the study guide's instrumentalism, their position provides a valuable starting point for the chapter's discussion: I will argue, on the contrary, that liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy – here represented by the realist norm – actually combines with instrumentalism to decide the study guide's function, its format and its content. This will be explored further through investigations of the relationship between study guide revision questions and typical examination questions, of the way that study guides transfer received critical notions internally between series and editions, and of the specific way in which the realist norm, uncomfortably, operates as a stock-humanist notion within the study guide's instrumentally informed plot-driven format.

A realist norm in study guides on Thomas Hardy's fiction

In my general survey of study guides on Hardy's fiction ranging from the 1950s to the year 2000, I have found a dominant and consistent preoccupation, both in plot-summaries and in study questions, with the plausibility of chains of events within Hardy's narratives and with the degree to which his characters are convincingly portrayed. These and numerous similar examples testify to this: 'How far are chance and coincidence responsible for the events of the novel?';¹ 'Does the plot of *Tess* too much rely upon chance or coincidences to be believable';² 'Discuss Hardy's successes and failures in creating convincing speech for his characters';³ 'In what ways do you find that Alec D'Urberville is inconsistently presented?';⁴ 'The portrayal of Festus Derriman has been condemned as exaggerated. Do you agree with

¹ Barbara Murray, *Thomas Hardy: Far from the Madding Crowd*, York Notes, ed. A.N. Jeffares and Suheil Bushrui (Harlow: York Press/Longman, 1991), 86.

² David Lindley, *Thomas Hardy: Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, York Notes, ed. A.N. Jeffares and Suheil Bushrui (Harlow: York Press/Longman, 1991), 81.

³ Lindley, *Tess*, 82.

⁴ Graham Handley, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Brodie's Notes, ed. Graham Handley (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 126.

this?’⁵ These examples, and the presence of a vast number of similarly phrased study questions, indicate that study guides tend to treat Hardy’s fiction in accordance with what we might call a *realist norm*. *Notes on Chosen English Texts on Under the Greenwood Tree* from 1959 describes Hardy’s deployment of what Roland Barthes has since described as the reality effect: ‘A sense of reality is given by little circumstantial details. They help to give clearer definition to the picture in the reader’s mind, and when such details are “remembered” by the narrator it seems to give all the reality of fact’.⁶ Here, the interaction between reader and narrator is described within a framework of realist assumptions. But what is more, the study guide quite frequently expects an even deeper kind of verisimilitude from Hardy’s literary realism; one which seems to stretch beyond the reach of the fictional: ‘If events become too weird or incredible then the whole structure of the novel will collapse because we won’t be able to accept the reality of the people or of what happens to them’.⁷ At such moments, the study guide seems to forget that the activity of reading fiction depends on the principal premise that the authorial discourse has in fact been offered precisely as fictional.⁸ At these moments, the study guide employs ‘reality’ and/or ‘history’ as objective references, or ‘checks’, for the validity of narrative events and the plausibility of characters:

We tend to romanticise the past, remembering with affection the moments of fun and friendship. So, in creating these likeable rustics, simple-minded and warm-hearted, is Hardy guilty of a distortion? Is he being untruthful – giving us what he would like to believe rather than a wholly honest account?⁹

The same expectation, which assumes that Hardy’s fiction attempts the objective depiction of an external, non-fictional, world, commonly manifests itself in study guides on Hardy from the 1950s. Here, the fiction is expected to reflect historical content: ‘What details of military life in the time of the Napoleonic wars are given in these chapters?’;¹⁰ ‘What have you learnt from this book of the theatre in the early nineteenth century?’;¹¹ ‘What customs

⁵ Kathleen M. Goad, *Thomas Hardy The Trumpet-Major*, Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1951), 61.

⁶ Norman T. Carrington, *Thomas Hardy: Under the Greenwood Tree*, Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1959), 48; Roland Barthes, ‘The Reality Effect’, in *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1986).

⁷ Colin Temblett-Wood, *Far From the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy*, Macmillan Master Guides, ed. James Gibson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 50.

⁸ See Richard Walsh, *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 13-37.

⁹ Temblett-Wood, *Madding Crowd*, 42.

¹⁰ Goad, *Trumpet-Major*, 46.

¹¹ Goad, *Trumpet-Major*, 62.

at the wedding of Dick and Fancy were different from those at a present-day wedding?’¹² In the 1950s as well as in more recent study guides, moreover, the difficulty of separating fact from fiction comes to expression in the description of Wessex as a real geographical place: ‘Wessex was there and is there; it is vital to our understanding of Hardy to sense its reality’;¹³ ‘Hardy creates a sense of realism and verisimilitude by drawing on real places’.¹⁴ Indeed, many a study guide has followed the 1959 guide on *Under the Greenwood Tree* in giving a map of Wessex that shows Hardy’s place names translated into their ‘real names’.¹⁵ The various ways in which study guides treat Hardy’s texts according to realist expectations – discussions of the probability of characters and narrative events; the idea of Wessex as a reflection of ‘historical’ England – testify to the strong presence of the realist norm within the study guide genre.

Liberal humanist aesthetics in study guides: Widdowson and Wotton’s anti-humanist criticism

The notion of Wessex as an existing geographical place is understood by Wotton as participating in a liberal humanist ideal of aesthetic ‘transcendence’: ‘determined by the ancient idealist problematic of mimesis, [it] robs writing of its reality by according it the status of an image of the real’.¹⁶ It thus serves to ‘replace the concrete historicity of Hardy’s writing with an idealist universality’, which ‘(re)produces it in the image of a totalizing discourse, a moment in the endless continuum of man’s developing consciousness’.¹⁷ Here, Wotton points out a complicity between liberal humanist aesthetic ideals of universality and the ideology of realism’s mimetic ideal. There seems, then, to be an affinity between the realist norm within the study guide and certain critical assumptions associated, by Wotton, with liberal humanism. Indeed, Wotton seeks to identify the ways in which certain liberal humanist conceptions of Hardy have been reproduced in the critical reception of Hardy’s work over time. This project is shared by Widdowson, who, in a related investigation of the reproduction of a certain image of Hardy in criticism and education, describes

¹² Carrington, *Greenwood Tree*, 72.

¹³ Temblett-Wood, *Madding Crowd*, 34.

¹⁴ Karen Sayer, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy*, York Notes Advanced, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: York Press, 1998), 61.

¹⁵ Carrington, *Greenwood Tree*, 3.

¹⁶ George Wotton, *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1985), 186.

¹⁷ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 192.

‘improbablism’ as a global problem in Hardy criticism.¹⁸ This problem, which Widdowson views as an expression of what he calls ‘the realist/humanist ideo-aesthetic’,¹⁹ has manifested itself since the late nineteenth-century reception of Hardy’s fiction, consistently describing his writing as clumsy, melodramatic, sensationalist and unrealistic. The examples given in the previous section of study guide questions concerning chance and coincidence and the realistic portrayals of characters testify to the existence of such a problem of ‘improbablism’ in study guides. Considered negatively, these qualities of Hardy’s fiction are a negation of realism, and thus conducive to the materialist critiques of humanist idealism by association with realism carried out by Wotton and Widdowson. Both give descriptions of study guides on Hardy’s fiction as participating in a liberal humanist critical suppression of textual elements within his works which are unacceptable to bourgeois realism because of their political implications. In their shared view, liberal humanist criticism is an active force of bourgeois class interest, and Hardy’s fiction, on account of its non-realist or improbable features, is emasculated by the interests of the ruling class. Henry James’s condescension towards the flawed but ‘good little Thomas Hardy’, and F.R. Leavis’s dismissal of Hardy from *The Great Tradition* (1948),²⁰ is explained by both critics in terms of Hardy’s deterministic lack of faith in individual agency, which, when expressed through his flawed realism, calls ‘the whole humanist myth in question’.²¹

The relevance of the work of these two critics for the purposes of the present discussion lies in the attention paid, albeit briefly, to study guides in both accounts. Because the genre has not received much critical attention, Wotton and Widdowson’s treatments of study guides merit particular consideration. Furthermore, their shared view of the study guide’s role in the examination system and in Hardy reception represents a useful foil for further developing our understanding of the guide’s internal tension between instrumentality and disinterest. My previous chapter explored the dual impulse of the neoliberal ethos and liberal humanist aesthetics implied by the study guide’s function as a technology of the self. It exposed some ideological assumptions aligned with neoliberalism inherent in the study

¹⁸ Peter Widdowson, *Hardy in History: A Study in Literary Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1989), Widdowson, 25.

¹⁹ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 23.

²⁰ See Percy Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), I:190; F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 34.

²¹ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 75. For more on the relationship between Hardy and liberal humanist criticism, see pp. 26-29 and Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 145-55. See also Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters* (London: Verso, 1982), 245-45; Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), 127.

guide, and briefly addressed the way in which the guide's liberal humanist impulse is relegated to its overall instrumental, and latterly neoliberalised, function. Both Widdowson and Wotton describe study guides as promoting uncritical habitual thinking, relating the influence underlying that habituation to a specifically liberal humanist conception of Hardy the author. Their accounts, then, are useful for the purposes of the present discussion because they explore the way that the influence of liberal humanist aesthetics operates within the study guide. However, they consider that influence quite apart from the larger instrumental, non-literary, framework of the study guide's participation in (neoliberal) instrumentalism. As proponents of an anti-humanist material criticism, Widdowson and Wotton, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer and the young Marx, do *not* view aesthetic experience as a site of radical potential, and are suspicious of the concept of aesthetic experience due to its supposed expression of bourgeois liberal humanist ideals. They entertain no implicit notions of disinterest or of the transcendent potential of aesthetic engagement, but participate in a Marxist anti-humanist attack on humanist ideals of individualism, consciousness, and transcendence. Hence, their accounts of the study guide fail to situate it within the framework of a tension between liberal humanism and instrumentalism. They do not acknowledge the subjugation of liberal humanist aesthetic notions of disinterest by the overall instrumental function of the study guide, nor that liberal humanism is ultimately *not* the principal ideological influence governing the study guide and the ideas it habituates in its reader. Somewhat one-dimensionally, then, Widdowson and Wotton attribute the study guide's habituation of stock ideas to the guide's participation in liberal humanism itself.

According to Wotton, the study guide participates in the dissemination and habituation of hegemonic liberal humanist notions dealing in false ideals of individual consciousness and the free play of the mind. He writes that study guides

are essentially structured on the basis of a repetition of the novel (in summary form) accompanied by a commentary. This structure reveals the basic contradiction in a system based on the interaction between the critical structure of perceptions and the individual student's personal point of view. How *can* the student have an individual view in the face of a Thomas Hardy who has been so massively constructed by the discourse of aesthetic ideology? And yet the whole point of the exercise is precisely to allow the free play of individual interpretations, the articulation of subjective points of view expressive of a democratic critical freedom of thought.²²

Here, Wotton describes the study guide as providing a regulated freedom within the parameters of liberal humanist ideology. As described in chapter one, the study guide expresses discomfort at the difficult reconciliation of the student's 'own thinking' with the study guide's own role, as *guide*, in that process. That anxiety is manifest in the routinely

²² Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 203.

given caveats pronouncing the regulated freedom to govern one's own subjective responses to the literary text. The encouragement of the student's 'own thinking', in this scenario, represents an internalisation of the protocols of the study guide – a process which ultimately discourages thinking beyond the framework of the study guide's habituated conventions. Wotton also addresses the phenomenon of these disclaimers. He views them, correspondingly, as attempts to overcome inherent inconsistencies in this liberal humanist regulation of freedom of thought: 'each of the Notes in one form or another is at pains to disclaim any authoritarian intentions'.²³ In the last sentence of the above long quotation, moreover, Wotton seems to be describing the troublesome contradiction, also addressed in chapter one, within the pedagogical project of liberal humanist aesthetics: the 'democratic critical freedom of thought' to which Wotton refers is supposedly disinterested, and yet it is part and parcel of the project of *utilising* individual disinterested aesthetic experiences for the interested social purpose of democracy. The study guide, as I have shown, is an expression of this conflicted project because its targeted pedagogical function, at the level of the individual, brings out and externalises the instrumentality which inheres in liberal humanist notions of aesthetic education, where the aims of the pedagogical exercise are ultimately not disinterested, but social and political.

Wotton views the national examination system as ideologically encoded in the same way as the study guide: the examination system entails a scenario in which literature is accessible to anyone who can read, but in which readers are required by that system to read in certain specific ways.²⁴ He describes the instrumentalising function of the national examination system thus:

In some ways the system of national examinations is analogous to the system of commodity production itself and 'Thomas Hardy' exists in the former as commodities do in the latter for [sic] just as in the capitalist mode of production useful articles are produced *for the purpose* of being exchanged and not for their use value, so in the examination system the novels of Thomas Hardy are (re)produced *for the purpose* of passing examinations and not for their pleasure or enjoyment value. Of course commodities *are* useful and Hardy's novels *do* give pleasure, but that is not *why* they are produced or read under these circumstances.²⁵

Wotton notes that the implications of this instrumentalism 'are considerable for it means that in the education system writing has the status of a *pretext*. The real object of study of the "literary text" is not writing itself but its ideological (re)productions'.²⁶ A particular critical

²³ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 203.

²⁴ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 200.

²⁵ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 200.

²⁶ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 201.

structure of perceptions is activated ‘in the school/exam system in an increasingly sophisticated “critical” form which enables students to appropriate ideology and make themselves its bearers and even its creators’.²⁷ In other words, Wotton holds that liberal humanist values are taught, through engagement with literary texts, for a conditioned and determinate outcome. The similarities between Wotton’s description of the education system and my own description of the study guide’s instrumental purpose are obvious. Study guides are indeed produced *for the purpose* of passing examinations, and they treat literary texts in accordance with this aim. Wotton’s view of the study guide is similar to mine, but he fails, importantly, to recognise the status of the study guide’s relationship with the education system at large. This leads to a neglect of the particular generic plight of the study guide. For Wotton, study guides are instrumental because they are *part of* the education system; the study guide is straightforwardly integrated by that larger structure. So, in conflating the study guide’s projects with those of the larger education system, Wotton cannot appreciate the specific and unusual relationship between that system and the study guide, where the latter is external to and parasitic upon the former. The study guide – by way of its opportunism – *does* participate in the examination system, but it does so in a way that differs, crucially, from Wotton’s description.

Wotton is right that when viewed as a manual for obtaining liberal humanist values, or *taste*, through obviously instrumental means, the study guide becomes a small-scale version of the instrumentalising examination system he describes in the above quotations. However, the study guide, in its modern configuration, cannot easily be identified as a manual for taste alone.²⁸ Here, Wotton misses an important opportunity for recognising the unique pragmatic situation of the study guide genre, which is yet more strategically rationalising than he suggests. Because it participates in the examination system only through its market driven appeal to the material self-interest of students, and the ultimate consolidation of this into a neoliberal work ethic, it sits at a remove from the examination system that Wotton describes, and participates strongly in an ideology which, unlike liberal humanist aesthetics, has nothing to do with literary values. Wotton’s critique of liberal humanist aesthetics depends, as we have seen, on its participation in capitalist ideals of individualism, and he is correct that liberal humanist education depends upon individualism and freedom of choice. This liberal focus on the individual is, indeed, a structural necessity for the study guide’s approach. As a technology of the self, the study guide’s very point relies upon the possibility of individual self-development in competition with others within

²⁷ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 201.

²⁸ The study guide’s role as a manual for taste will be explored in chapter four.

a capitalist society. And, as he also points out, study guides are founded upon, and require for their effective functioning, the principle of the individual's free play of responses within certain ideological parameters. Importantly, though – and unrecognised by Wotton – this liberal humanist ideal of individualism is precisely what opens the door to neoliberalism's extra-literary and entrepreneurial concerns, for without individualism, the neoliberal ethos cannot operate. Wotton's anti-humanist criticism fails to recognise the study guide's predisposition towards neoliberalism because that criticism concerns itself strictly with representations of class and class interests *within a literary culture* dominated by bourgeois liberal humanist concerns. This demarcation reflects the close association between liberal humanist aesthetics and the basic assumptions of the discipline of English literary studies. However, neoliberalism, whilst increasingly present in the cultural field, has no time for the literary in its rationalising pursuit of economic growth. And because the study guide's primary concern is in accordance with this neoliberal logic, its liberal humanist aesthetics become secondary to its overall purpose as examination guide – the student's achievement of specific quantifiable attainment goals.

Widdowson's account, too, fails to consider the study guide's internal tension between the impulses of liberal humanist aesthetics and a rationalising neoliberal logic. Widdowson, like Wotton, describes study guides as part and parcel of a liberal humanist education system which perpetuates bourgeois commonplaces about Hardy the author:

in their recounting of the plot, and their analysis of 'themes', 'characterisation', and 'style' – however 'neutral' and 'descriptive' these may appear to be – [study guides] have a substantial effect in reproducing 'Hardy' in conventional terms and in perpetuating the literary-critical pedagogic praxis which underpins it.²⁹

In thus briefly describing the *modus operandi* through which the perpetuation of a conventional image of Hardy is carried out through pedagogical practice, Widdowson points to the importance of the study guide's structural functioning – its formulaic instrumentality – for the perpetuation of critical commonplaces in education. Widdowson's assumption is that liberal humanist ideology is driving the perpetuation of stock ideas about Hardy for the purposes of maintaining its hegemonic status within literary studies. However, his description of the study guide's perpetuation of clichéd liberal humanist thinking could successfully be used to describe the way that the study guide utilises the perpetuation of those very ideas for the purposes of the *extra-literary* aim of student grade attainment. But because his concern lies with Hardy criticism and its influence on education rather than with a generic description of the study guide, Widdowson, like Wotton, subsumes the study guide

²⁹ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 26.

under the rubric of the institutions of criticism and education – thus failing to discover the extraordinary and complex status of the study guide’s pragmatic position as a heavily rationalising instrument for attainment. Because he sees the study guide too readily as participating in what he describes as a liberal humanist education system, Widdowson misses the importance of the study guide’s contribution to a neoliberal ethos in its pragmatic relationships with educational policies, examination systems, markets and student consumers.

So, in treating the study guide as an endorsed participant in the education system in the same way as one might treat a school textbook, Widdowson and Wotton do not sufficiently problematise the study guide’s participation in the ‘(re)production of the discourse of aesthetic ideology’.³⁰ Wotton holds, for example, that study guides participate in the process which culminates in the ‘*the moment of examination*’ as an isolated ‘moment of ideological interpellation’, claiming that the fact that ‘this crucial encounter has been ideologically determined in certain specific ways is evident from the numerous and popular series of “Study Notes”’.³¹ Wotton is right that the study guide is an indication of this ideologically determining process, but this is largely because of what it reveals, symptomatically, about the process it latches on to, more or less uninvited, through its pragmatic mimicking of examination questions. Widdowson and Wotton fail to appreciate the ideological chain of transmission that operates within the study guide: study guides follow logically from examinations, they do not lead to them. The study guide’s expression of liberal humanist aesthetic ideology is not at all *accidental*: insofar as it operates within the guide, that presence is determined by the principles that govern the discipline of English in general. However, the presence of that liberal humanism within the study guide is to a large extent *incidental*: it is the path of least resistance for an overriding tactical concern with sales and learning objectives.

Study guides and examination boards

Indeed, Widdowson’s own examples of typical examination questions on Hardy’s fiction, when compared with examples of typical study guide revision questions, serve to illustrate that the presence of critical conventions such as the realist norm in study guides derives from the influence of examination questions. Widdowson gives an extended analysis of A-level

³⁰ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 202.

³¹ Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 202.

and other upper secondary school examination questions on Hardy's fiction from the late 1920s to the late 1980s, and finds that 'the questions asked about [Hardy] are both extremely similar across boards and over time, and that they operate for the most part within a restricted field of critical and ideological discourse'.³² The questions reveal a consistent concern with Hardy's 'improbablism', and also with Hardy's position as a pastoral humanist. As we have seen, Wotton views liberal humanist descriptions of Wessex as positing a continuity between aesthetic ideals of universality and the mimetic ideal of realism. Likewise, Widdowson holds that this latter tendency – to celebrate Hardy as the great pastoralist of Wessex – is designed to render Hardy's imperfect realism less important, and thus to naturalise the overall image of Hardy as a great realist author. The ambivalence entailed by this situation lends itself nicely to the 'discuss' convention of examination questions. Most of Widdowson's examples are framed in precisely this way:

“In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy has sacrificed his characters to the mechanism of the plot”. What justice is there in this charge? (Cambridge, 1943); “Although the setting of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is realistic, the plot lacks conviction”. Do you agree? (London, June 1980); [...] ‘Hardy’s excessive use of coincidence has been criticised as a grave defect in his novels. What part does coincidence play in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and with what effect?’ (Cambridge, 1941).³³

Although these examination questions rest on an ambivalent critical conception of Hardy, they are phrased in a leading way, which invites the student to participate in ‘an assumed agreement between critic-examiner and critic-student about a hypothetical model of [...] the ultimately “probable” novel’.³⁴ Whilst the ‘discuss’ rubric does leave room for the student to disagree with the claim under discussion, the student understands this claim to be a firmly held critical belief, and is persuaded to think in terms of that claim.³⁵

I have found that the format of the ‘discuss’ rubric is, as is to be expected, commonplace also in study guide revision questions, especially in those questions directly concerned with the probability of Hardy's realism: “The deaths in *Far From the Madding Crowd* are too convenient and too dramatic to be convincing.” Is this true?’,³⁶ “The ending is rushed and unconvincing.” Does the novel rely too heavily on coincidences?’,³⁷ ‘Explain

³² Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 83.

³³ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 85.

³⁴ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 85.

³⁵ Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 85.

³⁶ Temblett-Wood, *Madding Crowd*, 85.

³⁷ Nicola Alper, *Far From the Madding Crowd: Thomas Hardy*, York Notes, ed. John Polley and Martin Gray (Harlow: Longman/York Press, 1998), 86.

the workings of chance or coincidence within these chapters: are they too far-fetched to be possible?';³⁸ 'How far, in your opinion, does coincidence affect the mainstream of the story?';³⁹ 'Some of the events in the novel depend on coincidence or "fate". Discuss some of these coincidences and the effects they have on the story';⁴⁰ "'The good little Thomas Hardy has scored a great success with *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* which is chock-full of faults and falsity, and yet has a singular charm" (Henry James). Consider the novel in the light of this comment'.⁴¹ The observable likeness between these study guide revision questions and Widdowson's examination questions indicates that literary content arrives in study guides via their meticulous replication of these and similar examination questions. From an instrumental perspective, that replication is tactical. However, the pragmatic process of that replication also enables the study guide's habituation of widely held literary critical beliefs. The study guide's second-hand reception of such critical beliefs might be described as a 'trickle-down effect' from more serious criticism. The temporal lag entailed by this 'trickle-down' process explains why – as Widdowson and Wotton demonstrate in their historical reviews of Hardy criticism – the projects of the very earliest Hardy criticism are also the projects of the modern study guide.⁴² The metaphor of the trickle-down effect, furthermore, explains why the study guide's treatment of the literary often seems cheap and overly facile: just as the price of market commodities can fall and become more broadly attainable – and perhaps, *cheapened* by the adherent shift in social status –, criticism is transported from its disinterested sphere to be delivered, in vulgar budget version, into the hands of the study guide user. The affinity between this notion of cheapened criticism and the study guide's practical utility will be addressed further in chapter four, where the discussion returns to the idea that the study guide 'vulgarises' disinterested literary culture through its simultaneously formulaic and democratising method.

Evidence of the 'trickle-down effect' is discernible in the study guide's evasive treatment of naturalist aspects of Hardy's fiction. For, due to the study guide's tactical relationship with examination boards, its dismissal of naturalist tendencies in Hardy's fiction

³⁸ I.L. Baker, *Notes on Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd*, Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (Bath: James Brodie Ltd, 1964), 70.

³⁹ I.L. Baker, *Hardy: Jude the Obscure*, Brodie's Notes/Pan Revision Aids, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: Pan Educational, 1977), 124.

⁴⁰ David Langston, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy*, York Notes, ed. John Polley and Martin Gray (Harlow: Longman/York Press, 1998), 72.

⁴¹ James Gibson, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy*, Macmillan Master Guides, ed. James Gibson (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1986), 77.

⁴² Wotton, *Thomas Hardy*, 145-208; Widdowson, *Hardy in History*, 11-76.

as disruptive, inconsistent, or didactic, reflects the fact that the British critical heritage generally paid little attention to naturalism. In his genre study of naturalist fiction, David Baguley writes that Victorian Britain lacks the usual indications of a naturalist literary movement - ‘groups, manifestos, polemics, theoretical writings’ – and finds that in British literary history and criticism, with its focus on nineteenth-century realism, naturalism seems to be ‘as elusive as the Scarlet Pimpernel!’⁴³ Yet Baguley holds that *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is a paradigmatically naturalist text,⁴⁴ and discusses *Jude the Obscure* in a similar vein.⁴⁵ British study guides on these two novels, correspondingly, do not tend to discuss naturalism directly.⁴⁶ But due to the much stronger presence of naturalism in American literary history, US study guides freely engage with the question of Hardy’s naturalism: *Monarch Notes* on *Jude* dating from 1965 devotes two whole pages to discussing the question: ‘Is *Jude* a naturalistic novel?’⁴⁷ That this American study guide should discuss naturalism explicitly whilst British guides are silent, indicates the extent to which the contents of study guides rely on the critical conventions that inform the national institutions of examination. Unsurprisingly, from this perspective, Henrik Ibsen’s more naturalistic works, though written in a different literary genre and within a different national context, are given – by UK study guides – the same ‘improbabilist’ treatment as Hardy’s works:

Several critics have suggested that the ending of the play is too sensational, too ‘stagey’. Others have said that the character of Pastor Manders is too extreme, that Ibsen allowed his personal venom against the Norwegian clergy to push him into a caricature that is less realistic than the other portrayals.⁴⁸

The quotation is taken from one of three UK study guides, from the early 1980s, on Ibsen’s works. In these study guides’ ubiquitous discussions of Ibsen’s writing as unsuccessful on account of its flawed realism, we re-encounter the habitual study guide conceptions that inhere in the realist norm. These three study guides on Ibsen, moreover, are the only published guides on more overtly naturalist texts than Hardy’s. This, of course, is because

⁴³ David Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 29-31.

⁴⁴ Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction*, 118-19.

⁴⁵ Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction*, 199, 213.

⁴⁶ The only two exceptions to this rule are a couple of *York Notes Advanced* guides from around the year 2000 that both discuss, and dismiss, the possibility of characterising *Tess* and *Jude* as naturalist works. See Sayer, *Tess*, 79-80; Julian Cowley, *Jude the Obscure: Thomas Hardy*, *York Notes Advanced*, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: Longman/York Press, 2001), 87.

⁴⁷ Ralph A. Ranald, *Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure*, *Monarch Notes* (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), 111-12.

⁴⁸ Adele King, *Ghosts: Henrik Ibsen*, *York Notes* (Harlow: Longman, 1981), 49.

naturalism is given little or no attention in A-level English and the criticism by which it is informed; the study guide's literary pronouncements depend upon the critical conventions of those institutions.

Lazy writing and editing: borrowing, overlap, and repetition

That the facile repetition of received critical notions is a standard characteristic of the study guide genre is further indicated in the statement that: 'No account of a Hardy novel can be complete without a consideration of his use of chance and coincidence'.⁴⁹ This statement, from the 1985 *Macmillan Masterguides* publication on *Far From the Madding Crowd*, articulates the consensus that any successful study guide on, or indeed any successful account of, Hardy's novels must fulfil the criterion of considering his 'improbablism'. That this particular publication should be concerned with study guide genre requirements is unsurprising given that the series was new in 1985, and had to situate itself in relation to the generic examples of other more established study guide series. The series ran only between 1985 and 1988, and its short-lived attempt to find its place amongst other study guide series provides an insight into what it might take for a study guide to situate itself as such. That it should closely resemble *Brodie's Notes* is a given, as they shared a publisher, Macmillan, at the time. Perhaps, from a market point of view, there was no great need for *Macmillan Master Guides* alongside *Brodie's Notes*, the latter being the study guide series with the longest publication history, stretching back to 1937. Other series have modelled themselves on *Brodie's Notes*, too. For example, the Canadian series *Coles Notes*, which sold its U.S. rights to *CliffsNotes* in 1958, published reprints of *Brodie's Notes* editions. When *York Notes* appeared on the market in 1980, it too had clearly looked to *Brodie's Notes* for inspiration in terms of its structural format. *Brodie's Notes*, then, has been a powerful influence on the study guide market.

Importantly, what this borrowing, overlap, and repetition between series reveals is that there is another dimension to the study guide's pragmatic and opportunistic use of literary criticism: the study guide not only replicates the criticism of examination boards, but, as the genre reproduces itself, it transfers habitual critical notions from study guide to study guide. Further indication of such inter-series borrowing, overlap and repetition is the correspondence between the sections on the plot of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in *Methuen Notes* and *Brodie's Notes*, the opening sentences of which are strikingly similar:

⁴⁹ Temblett-Wood, *Madding Crowd*, 57.

‘The plot of *Far From the Madding Crowd* is simple and direct enough’,⁵⁰ and ‘*Far From the Madding Crowd* is a simple love story and its plot is not intricate’.⁵¹ Both sections go on to discuss the question of the artificiality of the novel’s plot in analogous ways. Such overlap also typically occurs within individual series. For example, the same study question appears verbatim in different *Brodie’s Notes* publications by different writers on different novels: ‘Does the long arm of coincidence stretch too far or too obviously anywhere in the story?’⁵²

What is more, most study guide editions are simply reprints of previous editions, revised rarely and sparingly. An example of a new edition on a literary work which has previously been treated within the same series is Graham Handley’s 1986 *Brodie’s Notes to Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. Here, much of the text of the 1966 guide to *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, written by the series editor Norman T. Carrington, has been kept. In general, the revised editions of study guides make very few changes to the text itself. Any changes tend to take place mainly in the meta-reflections on the guide’s purpose and function given in prefaces and on publication covers. In the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, guides display an increased focus on their commitments to the external specifications of educational policies: ‘Each study aid has been adapted to meet the needs of current examination requirements.’⁵³ The relation between this increased attention to curricula and examination outcomes and the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 will be discussed in chapter five. In the present context, my implication in using the above example is that such changes in the study guide’s meta-reflection constitute a form of self-advertising which rarely reflects changes in habituated study guide *content*, but which is expressive of, rather, the study guide’s external relationships with educational policies and markets.

Plot-summaries: the logical priority of *fabula* over *syuzhet*

These three pragmatic motivations for the study guide’s dissemination of literary critical ideas like the realist norm – the study guide’s relationship with the larger framework of

⁵⁰ I.L. Baker, *Far From the Madding Crowd: Thomas Hardy*, Brodie’s Notes, ed. Graham Handley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 86; I.L. Baker, *Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd*, Brodie’s Notes/Pan Study Aids, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: Pan Books, 1976), 16.

⁵¹ *Notes on Thomas Hardy’s Far From the Madding Crowd*, Methuen Study-Aid Series (London: Methuen, 1968), 39; *Notes on Hardy’s Far From the Madding Crowd*, Methuen’s Study-Aids (London: Methuen Educational, 1971), 62; *Notes on Far From the Madding Crowd: Thomas Hardy*, Methuen Notes Study Aids (London: Methuen Paperbacks, 1978), 66.

⁵² Baker, *Madding Crowd* (1964), 102; Baker, *Madding Crowd* (1976), 95; Norman T. Carrington, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles: Hardy*, Brodie’s Notes/Pan Study Aids, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: Pan Books 1976), 76.

⁵³ Handley, *Tess*, 5.

education, its market-driven approach to revision, and its internal generic problem of lazy writing and editing – are interwoven. The fact that they all, though driven, perhaps, by more instrumental concerns, lead to the dissemination of literary ideas indicates the extent to which the study guide’s liberal humanist aesthetic pronouncements are difficult to separate from its formulaic instrumentality. The way that these ideological currents are tied up with one another in the study guide, moreover, reflects the way in which liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy itself involves an undeniable, and irremovable, element of instrumentality. But just as liberal humanist aesthetics relies on the pragmatic exercise of codification for its pedagogical dissemination, the instrumental format of the study guide is useless without its literary content. After all, the primary means of meeting attainment targets in English literature is the demonstration of a knowledge of literature, and this means, of course, that the particular literary pronouncements of the study guide play a crucial role in its practical success or failure. It is no accident that the present discussion of the realist norm in study guides on Hardy’s fiction has led us to understand that the apparently conflicting ideologies of liberal humanist aesthetics and neoliberalised instrumentalism combine, perhaps unexpectedly, in the study guide’s function. In fact, the realist norm is especially conducive to the study guide’s functional imperatives.

In order to develop this point, let us remind ourselves of the study guide’s ‘improbabilist’ treatment of Hardy’s narratives: ‘In all Hardy’s novels there are many coincidences. [...] The reader must decide for himself whether he considers such past the realm of probability’;⁵⁴ ‘Do you consider that the plot of the novel is too improbable?’;⁵⁵ ‘Do you find D’Urberville’s “religious mania” convincing?’;⁵⁶ ‘In what ways does coincidence play an important part in this section?’;⁵⁷ ‘Give an account of the part played by coincidence or chance in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*’;⁵⁸ ‘In all Hardy’s novels the working out of the plot depends a great deal on coincidence, and external circumstances play a large part in the lives of his characters, but so long as the events which happen can be believed and the story does not become improbable, this does not matter very much’.⁵⁹ The narratological concepts, derived from Russian formalism, of *fabula* and *syuzhet*, provide a

⁵⁴ Carrington, *Greenwood Tree*, 14-15.

⁵⁵ Goad, *Trumpet-Major*, 61.

⁵⁶ Carrington, *Tess*, 71.

⁵⁷ Handley, *Tess*, 76.

⁵⁸ Handley, *Tess*, 125.

⁵⁹ Goad, *Trumpet-Major*, 39.

useful conceptual framework for understanding that the study guide's consistent concern with coincidence and probability reveals its perception that fabula (*what* is told) holds logical priority over syuzhet (*how* it is told). Hence, the study guide assumes that fabula is separable and can be extracted from the narrative. The plot-summary, especially, is an expression of the idea that fabula, as a separate entity, can be extracted from the literary work and re-presented in the study guide. This idea is central to the instrumental function of the study guide's format, which presents a concentrated version of the text; one more manageable for students and more amenable to measurement and assessment. According to Richard Walsh, the traditional narratological distinction between fabula and syuzhet in fictional narrative depends on a realist understanding of narration, where fabula 'is always literal in relation to its own sujet. In other words, the distinction between the (complete, objective) fabula and the (partial) sujet of a fictional narrative is negotiated through a narrator (agent of the narrating instance) who, however incompletely or even unreliably, is communicating fictional facts'.⁶⁰ As illustrated by the above examples of the study guide's insistence upon 'probability', the study guide's notion of fabula implies just such a realist conception: it insists upon the 'abstraction and logical priority of fabula as the basis for the selections and arrangements of the realized sujet'.⁶¹ So, the realist norm, which represents the study guide's preoccupation with the probability of Hardy's narratives, has a determinate instrumental purpose beyond that of reflecting examination questions: it underlies the guide's understanding that fabula, as a supposedly objective entity, can be usefully separated from its syuzhet and employed in instrumental pedagogy.

For the study guide, the logical priority of fabula provides for evaluation of a novel's success independent of its narration or discursive rhetoric. The criterion of success becomes the plausibility of the characters and events in themselves, according to a facile conception of realism as an objective standard. This logic is especially palpable in study guides on those of Hardy's novels that participate in naturalist genre conventions, thus disturbing the study guide's simplistic realist expectation. The study guide, in its tactical and reductive use of criticism, typically negates elements of literary works, or of their critical reception, which do not sit comfortably with the genre's functional format. This discomfort with that which does not fit is manifest, as will be discussed below, in the way that the study guide's function revolves, fundamentally, around the plot-summary. It is also evident, however, from study guides' treatment of naturalistic aspects of *Tess* and *Jude*. For, whilst there is strikingly little mention of naturalism in study guides on *Tess* and *Jude*, an idea which appears frequently is

⁶⁰ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 62.

⁶¹ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 66.

that Hardy's realism is misguided, and has been led astray by naturalistic ideas. This idea appears in conjunction with the notion that Hardy the author/narrator has a lamentable habit of 'intruding' into his own texts for didactic or political purposes. *Jude* is described as 'a novel of ideas, and Hardy has always shown a fatal tendency to lecture his reader on the ideas in his work'.⁶² At times, it appears, the book is 'rather tiresomely propagandist'.⁶³ Hardy's explicit didacticism is evidently of a kind which upsets realist expectations: The author intrudes 'into the story and at once the illusion of reality is suspended. A novelist should keep himself in the background, so that we do not remember that the people in his story are simply his creations'.⁶⁴ It is felt that this didactic 'clash with everyday cause-and-effect realism is too resounding to allow us to be convinced'.⁶⁵ Indeed, there 'are a few occasions when the reader feels that [Hardy] is distorting the scene to make a propaganda point'.⁶⁶ Even where study guides are somewhat more familiar with literary theory, the same notion is expressed: 'The author should not normally be assumed to be the narrator, but sometimes Hardy does seem to intervene'.⁶⁷ So, in thus 'intervening' into his own text and 'distorting the scene', Hardy is seen to corrupt the narrative through his manipulation of a notionally pre-existing fabula; a raw material which, somehow, deserves to be presented in some undistorted way. The sense that Hardy is 'distorting the scene', moreover, resonates with the notion, described at the beginning of this chapter, of his failure to reflect historical reality and the possibility that he is not giving the reader a 'wholly honest' account of 'the past'.

As indicated above, the study guide's facile conception of a pre-existing fabula is most prominent in the plot-summary, the basic structure upon which each individual guide is modelled. In the plot-summary, fabula is perceived to function as the content to which the novel's syuzhet merely provides access. It is precisely this plot-summary structure that allows the study guide its function as a short-cut to literary reading – an apparent stand-in for the literary work. However, as Walsh suggests, the 'reader's engagement with sujet does not enable the reconstruction of fabula, but its construction'.⁶⁸ Accordingly, no abstractable

⁶² *Notes on Hardy's Jude the Obscure*, Study Aids (London: Methuen Paperbacks, 1977), 64.

⁶³ [Methuen], *Jude*, 66.

⁶⁴ Carrington, *Tess*, 21.

⁶⁵ [Methuen], *Jude*, 9.

⁶⁶ Lindley, *Tess*, 67.

⁶⁷ Sayer, *Tess*, 62.

⁶⁸ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 68.

fabula is latent within the work, ready to be extracted and exhibited by study guides. Such a notion of fabula, in fact, is ‘either inscrutable, or else accessible only in the form of a narrative version in spite of itself’.⁶⁹ A plot-summary cannot itself be regarded as an exhibition of fabula, ‘because it is a manifest narrative, with its own discourse features, and furthermore, it is not unique – it is always possible to summarize a narrative in a number of ways’.⁷⁰ However, the study guide’s authority as an examination tool relies upon the effacement of its own biases and predispositions, and so a supposedly abstracted fabula, or plot-summary, is presented, not as one of many possible interpretations, but as somehow ‘fundamental’ and thus ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’. As with the study guide’s lack of Foucault’s author function, discussed in the previous chapter, the study guide here presents itself precisely as objective and uncontentious. Indeed, the most ideologically powerful aspect of the study guide genre is its ability to ‘unconsciously’ participate in ideologies by parroting and perpetuating their values whilst presenting its pronouncements as neutral ‘fact’; what you need to know to pass the exam. The study guide, then, attempts to exercise a ‘scientific’ codification of literary works – objects which resist simple codification. This leads to an identification of the whole literary work with the study guide’s plot-summary – an eminently more straightforwardly quantifiable and ‘teachable’ text.

What is *really* happening within the study guide, despite its apparent contention that ‘narrative information can be conceived of in undistorted form’,⁷¹ reflects Walsh’s pragmatic conception of fabula as an ‘instrument of interpretation’ which ‘is pursued only so far as the needs of the occasion demand’.⁷² In this scenario, fabula typically simplifies syuzhet, reducing it ‘to the simplest terms consistent with the needs of the interpretation – most obviously to a chronological order, wherever practical and useful’.⁷³ Fabula, in this sense, is ‘always relative to and contingent upon both a given sujet and a specific act of interpretation’.⁷⁴ In the study guide, the narrative manifestation of the plot-summary is contingent, of course, upon the syuzhet it seeks to explain. The most dominant determining factor in the study guide’s use of fabula, however, is the instrumentally informed act of interpretation. For the study guide, then, the instrumental function of the plot-summary

⁶⁹ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 64.

⁷⁰ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 63.

⁷¹ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 66.

⁷² Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 68.

⁷³ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 66.

⁷⁴ Walsh, *Rhetoric of Fictionality*, 68.

enforces the prominence of the realist norm. The plot-driven format of the study guide, however, can only be effective when dealing with literary works which themselves are plot-driven, preferably novelistic and dramatic works, and preferably realist in aesthetic orientation. When Hardy's fiction upsets the structural harmony imposed by the realist norm, the difficulty of negotiating that disruption is expressed in a defensive shift of focus to the supposedly peculiar, and undesirable, discontinuity within those works. The analogous treatment of Ibsen's works in study guides serves to illustrate, moreover, that this problem is not restricted to study guides on Hardy. Furthermore, the simple mismatch between literary texts and the study guide format is not an exclusive source of such tensions: that mismatch is underscored by the two conflicting, and yet complicit, ideologies that govern the study guide genre. As chapter five will demonstrate in its discussion of study guides on John Keats's poetry, the study guide's attention to plot constitutes a site of conflict, internal to the study guide, between the instrumental format and the humanist demand for disinterested contemplation.

Conclusion

The presence of the realist norm in study guides on Hardy's novelistic fiction has proven a fruitful way of understanding the tense and entangled relationship between liberal humanism and instrumentality within the study guide genre. With respect to the latter, this chapter has looked at three distinct ways in which the realist norm interacts with the strategic rationalising of the study guide's function and format. First, as an example of a literary critical stock notion, the realist norm reflects the nature of the study guide's engagements with examination boards, where the meticulous replication of typical exam questions testifies to the study guide's uncritical and pragmatic dependence upon the examination system. This close attention to the expectations of examination boards and the literary critical ideas by which they are influenced is, of course, necessitated by the study guide's primary motivation – attuned to the neoliberal ethos – of improving student grade attainment. Another, but related, way that the literary critical content of the study guide comes to be habituated for pragmatic purposes is the apathetic manner in which the genre replicates and perpetuates itself. The half-hearted writing and editing of study guides again reflects their ultimately instrumental purpose. Thirdly, as an expression of the study guide genre's facile conception of realism, the realist norm is engaged in a complicity with the study guide's fundamental, and instrumentally informed, plot-driven structure. It underlies the study guide's central notion that fabula is the raw material of syuzhet, and thus that fabula can be

extracted and employed as a neutral and objective measure of the ‘plausibility’ of literary narratives. In this way, the plot-summary structure lends the study guide a simplified approach to literary pedagogy which disregards more troublesome aspects of literary codification within literary studies.

In these three ways, the study guide’s simple cause and effect realism comes to be perpetuated in aid of the study guide’s overall instrumentalism. As this chapter has also shown, the accounts of study guides on Hardy given by Widdowson and Wotton both neglect the complex collaboration between such instrumentalism and liberal humanist education. However, these two critics do identify the realist norm as an expression of the liberal humanist aesthetic conception of mimesis. Moreover, Wotton addresses the opposite side of the relationship between interest and disinterest in terms of a false idea of democratic freedom of thought within the study guide; whilst this chapter has focused mainly on the way that liberal humanist aesthetics operates within the study guide in aid of instrumentalism, Wotton’s focus shifts the attention to how liberal humanist pedagogy is drawn into instrumentalism in the very dissemination of its ostensibly disinterested ideas. In the next chapter, we too shall shift our focus in that direction. Whilst bearing in mind that the study guide is, crucially, co-inhabited by two conflicting and yet cooperating ideological determinations, we will turn our attention to Matthew Arnold’s liberal humanist motivations for publishing what I will describe as the first ‘proto-study guide’, revealing that the study guide – whilst subsequently co-opted by neoliberalism and other rationalising ideologies – was originally a liberal humanist endeavour.

Part II

Disinterest

Chapter 3

The Study Guide and English Literature as Arnoldian Social Mission

The strangely conflicted form of the study guide – the peculiar blend of its liberal humanist impulse and its strategic rationalising – reflects a broader problem within the discipline of English literature. The study guide is given its conflicted form because the discipline within which it emerges is split between a certain ideal of literary value and the institutionalisation required to teach that ideal. As a reflection of this problem of reconciliation, the study guide expresses tensions and difficulties that emerge from the discipline itself. These tensions and difficulties are, to a large extent, the inheritance of the founders of the discipline. One such founder, who has had a decisive influence on the discipline both as school and university subject, is Matthew Arnold.

Arnold's importance for the early institutionalisation of literature within the education system can hardly be overestimated, as he 'convinced education's overseers to create a legal mandate for English literature's place in the lives of the young'.¹ Thus, English poetry gained its status as a 'specific subject' in 1871, and by 1882, when Arnold's tenure as an inspector of schools was coming to an end, English literature had received compulsory status in schools.² Over time, Arnold's ideal of poetry as a humanising force has informed theories, both of pedagogy and of literary value, at the heart of the discipline, perhaps most notably those of I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis, and the *Scrutiny* movement. In this way, Arnold's ideas came to be institutionalised in the English curriculum. However, for Arnold, the move from humanist ideal to institutionalisation is particularly difficult. His social mission is based on a theory of aesthetic education which renders the liberal humanist tension between interest and disinterest especially acute. The mobilisation of the subjective and individual process of disinterested *Bildung*, or cultivation, for a broader social aim requires the use of educational *machinery* within which, according to Arnold's logic, the free play of culture is compromised.³ This pragmatic pedagogical situation turns the disinterested process of cultivation into an interested and directed process with a determinate end. Hence,

¹ John Willinsky, 'Matthew Arnold's Legacy: The Powers of Literature', *Research in the Teaching of English* 24, no. 4 (Dec. 1990): 345.

² Margaret Mathieson, *The Preachers of Culture: The Study of English and its Teachers* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 44; Willinsky, 'Arnold's Legacy', 345.

³ I use Arnold's term 'culture' throughout this chapter to refer to its relationship with a post-Kantian idealist conception of aesthetic education and *Bildung*.

if the discipline is split between ideal and institution – disinterest and interest –, it has inherited this split from a dilemma inherent in Arnold’s social mission which this chapter will expound.

The conflicted form of the study guide genre, which seems to participate in the project of English literature whilst simultaneously ‘corrupting’ it, is an expression of the very conflicts the discipline inherits from Arnold’s joint role as ideologue *and* pedagogue. In fact, Arnold himself published the first ‘proto-study guide’ in 1872, the year after poetry gained ‘special subject’ status in the elementary school, in a pragmatic attempt to address the problems triggered by the institutionalisation of his cultural ideal. Understanding how the study guide genre is prefigured by Arnold’s ‘proto-study guide’, *A Bible Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israel’s Restoration*, will make clear that the study guide emerges out of a conflicted pragmatic situation in which the balance between interest and disinterest is highly unstable. It will also allow us to see that as a genre, the study guide is instrumentalised from the outset. It is not the case that it comes to be *corrupted* by pragmatic, or neoliberal, concerns in the century that follows, but rather that the *balance* between interest and disinterest comes to be affected by the ideologies which govern education at a given time. That both *A Bible Reading* and the study guide should be expressive of a pragmatically motivated objectification of culture – and the projection of this onto the masses – serves to indicate, as this chapter will argue, that there is indeed within the study guide a space of political questions and orientations that is shared by both Arnold’s cultural ideology, with its Victorian conservative objectification of culture in the interests of this culture’s own promulgation, and neoliberalism’s new commodification of culture in the interests of capital.

The egalitarian spread of sweetness and light: individualism, the social, and Arnold’s pragmatic challenge

The study guide is in opposition to high culture not just because of its instrumentality, but also because of its popularity. And yet, the popularising impulse of the study guide actually has its origins in the very humanism that we associate with high culture. It belongs to a liberal humanist tradition which initially sought to make disinterested culture known to all levels of society in order to utilise its transformative potential for social reform. Arnold’s social project has its conceptual heritage in the German post-Kantian idealist tradition of aesthetic education, in which the individual’s *Bildung* is an ongoing disinterested process of self-cultivation through aesthetic appreciation, the humanising character of which ensures a

greater social good through the disinterested functioning of a collective democracy. The most well-known account of this theory, which holds that the aesthetic experience of 'culture' is the key to that disinterested stance, is given by Schiller in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), and reworked in the context of a British Romantic tradition by Coleridge in his theories on cultivation.⁴ Arnold's use of these ideas is associated with what Chris Baldick aptly calls the 'social mission of English criticism', which has been integral to the formation of the discipline of English literature.⁵ If, for Arnold, there was a need for such a social mission, this was due to a prevailing atmosphere of crisis in his society engendered by the decline of traditional religious faith in the face of a rising confidence in science, as well as the growing pains of an expanding middle class and the effect on the character of British society of this class's 'vulgar' material concerns. This crisis is associated by Arnold with the clash between interested instrumental forces, associated with civilisation, and disinterested culture.⁶

Kant is the first to make the distinction between *culture* and *civilisation* in 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784). For Kant, culture is tied up with morality insofar as both morality and culture concern the internal condition of the individual. Civilisation, on the other hand, does not share in this concern.⁷ Civilisation corresponds to Arnold's *machinery*, which he associates with administration of public life, science and industrial progress. For Arnold, the 'idea of perfection [i.e. culture] as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with [...] mechanical and material *civilisation*' [my emphasis].⁸ The German distinction between culture and civilisation, according to Arnold, is especially important in Britain because 'here that mechanical character, which civilisation tends to take everywhere, is shown in the most eminent degree'.⁹ The inward condition of culture is needed, consequently, to break that 'unsound habit of mind [...] which makes us

⁴ See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (London and Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), and *On the Constitution of Church and State*, ed. John Colmer (London and Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

⁵ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

⁶ For more on the distinction between *culture* and *civilisation*, see Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780 – 1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), xvi; Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 9-13; Michael John Kooy, *Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 158.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41-53.

⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37.

⁹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 37.

talk of things like coal or iron as constituting the greatness of England'.¹⁰ Arnold, like the German romanticist J. G. von Herder, views culture as that which binds the people of a nation together. He holds that in Britain 'the idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family [culture] is at variance with our strong individualism'.¹¹ Culture, however, has the potential to show 'that the worship of the mere freedom to do as one likes is worship of machinery'.¹² So, in opposition to this individualism of 'doing as one likes', Arnold poses a different form of individualism informed by his social mission: an individual duty to cultural self-cultivation for the benefit of the greater social good. For this reason, the education of the people in beauty and intelligence – the two necessary components of culture, described by Arnold most often as 'sweetness and light' – is central to Arnold's cultural ideology.

A Bible Reading for Schools was written in order to bring culture to the people as part of a democratic project of promulgating immaterial *Bildung*: 'to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas [...] freely, - nourished and not bound by them'.¹³ Arnold sought to make culture 'efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, and yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light'.¹⁴ Arnold's bypassing of the question of social relations in favour of this egalitarianism on the level of the immaterial, that is, of consciousness and ideas, has been extensively criticised, and as Baldick puts it: 'Arnold's influence as a social commentator rests upon his ability to make these reductions of social to moral tendencies indeed the spontaneous products of our consciousness, to make them seem as natural as possible'.¹⁵ This seemingly natural move, from structural social problems to idealist self-cultivation – from civilisation to culture – responsabilises the individual in a way which resembles the mode of governance proper to the neoliberal ethos. This helps explain the curious way in which that ethos and Arnold's duty to self-cultivation meet in the tense space of the study guide. I shall return to this point, but want to foreshadow that discussion here in relation to a comment on Arnold's move from the individual to broader social structures.

¹⁰ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 38-39.

¹¹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 37.

¹² Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 61.

¹³ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 52.

¹⁴ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 53.

¹⁵ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 36.

Arnold associates culture with individual self-cultivation, yet also wants to see it as the remedy to the unsatisfactory political situation of Victorian class society. His desire to put culture to political use requires him to develop a strategy for the installation of culture in the children of the working class through education in state institutions; in other words, for the institutional propagation of a condition he ultimately takes to be inherently personal and 'inward'. Thus, Arnold's social mission itself confronts a predicament, as culture – understood as an 'inward condition' – must express itself through the mediating machinery of schools. In order to disseminate culture to all levels of society and to inspire in the individuals who make up the social mass the very aesthetic experience which leads to collective *Bildung* and democracy, there needs to be a pragmatic pedagogical process which is instrumental and thus not at all disinterested. The pragmatic circumstances surrounding the teaching of the 'inward condition of culture', let alone the instrumental social objective of that pedagogy, seem at the very least difficult to reconcile with the initial ideal of disinterest. If culture is available merely through an internal process of self-cultivation, then how can this internal state of being be brought, not just to individuals, but to a nation *en masse*? Baldick comments on Arnold's problematic move from the individual to the social: 'Arnold had maintained that Culture was the seeking of a general and harmonious perfection, and by "general" he meant social rather than purely individual; yet at the same time he insisted that it was an "inward" condition independent of institutional machinery'.¹⁶ Not only does the education of the masses in sweetness and light necessitate the use of institutional machinery which, paradoxically, corrupts it; it also places responsibility on the person being educated for her own self-cultivation. Culture, for Arnold, provides a means of self-improvement which ultimately leads to a democratic state. To the extent that Arnold's conception of culture is not for the benefit of the individual, but for the good of the society, it involves a moral imperative for the entire population to strive to 'rise above' notions of class difference through shared tastes and cultural values: 'the individual is obliged, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection'.¹⁷ If, on the other hand, we are satisfied to be only our *ordinary selves*, we are bound to perform selfishly motivated acts rather than acts which would benefit the project of state democracy: 'We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*'.¹⁸ Accordingly, if a

¹⁶ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 54.

¹⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 36.

¹⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 71.

whole population is to be educated to this end, it is crucial for state schools to teach both the objects of such a culture – literature – and the imperative of its correct appreciation.

The development of the best self which is to be the basis for a firm state power, it appears, encounters problems and conflicts relating to the governing of that process. The notion of achieving a social goal through something inherently personal involves a logic analogous to that of neoliberalism's tendency to reduce social questions to questions of individual responsibility in relation to ends understood in terms of personal gain. Arnold's model, however, differs decisively from neoliberalism in that the individual duty towards the social good – towards becoming '*our* best self' – is not competitive: for Arnold, what benefits the social good is also an intrinsic personal good, such that each individual's personal good is not in conflict with the personal goods of other individuals. What is good for all is good for each. But whilst Arnold's imperative for self-improvement thus resists the false consciousness inherent in the comparable neoliberal imperative – the latter being designed to further a capitalist economy – there remains a conspicuous affinity between the way in which the individual is meant to relate to the social in Arnold's politics of education and the individualism of the neoliberal ethos as it comes to be expressed in the literature study guide. Although differing crucially from neoliberalism in its intention as antidote to self-interested materialism and the spread of utilitarianism in place of 'higher' values, Arnold's social mission involves a highly individualistic imperative for self-improvement which resembles the instrumental individualism behind the neoliberal work ethic. Culture becomes a general social remedy, and the cooperation of the individual in her cultivation becomes a condition for the development of democracy. In Arnold's individualistic duty towards the social it would appear that we can start to see the germination of a political space shared by Arnold's ideological legacy and educational neoliberalism, a space that will form the matrix for the study guide genre.

Given these peculiarities of Arnold's concept of English as a social mission, the concrete realisation of such a project requires the institutional technologies that govern it to incorporate a principle of strong individualism. Hence, Arnold decides against the introduction in Britain of an academy modelled on the French Academy because of the potential corruption of his disinterested ideal by what he takes to be an especially British reverence for machinery which causes a habit of 'blindly flying to this outward machinery of an Academy, in order to help ourselves'.¹⁹ He regrets having to do so, however, because such an academy would help in achieving for the British what Arnold refers to as an

¹⁹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 6.

intellectual conscience,²⁰ or as Baldick puts it: ‘a desire to know if they are right to admire a given kind of work, a willingness to defer to a “central” critical authority’.²¹ However, ‘it is more to his purpose to foster a habit of intellectual conscience and deference by pointing to England’s cultural shortcomings and to the need for a centre, than to create a real centre which might fall short of the ideal’.²² This scenario exposes the responsibility placed on the individual for her own cultural development in order to serve the larger social cause. Arnold holds that, because a British Academy is impossible, ‘every one among us with any turn for literature will do well to remember to what shortcomings and excesses, which such an academy tends to correct, we are liable; and the more liable, of course, for not having it’. Hence, every individual ‘will do well constantly to try himself in respect of these, steadily to widen his culture, severely to check in himself the provincial spirit’.²³ Because his conception of *Bildung* is necessarily opposed to machinery, Arnold cannot allow an official governing structure such as an academy. Although tempted to compromise on this front, Arnold decides that the British population is not sufficiently independent. Instead he appeals to an extreme individualism in which best selves are expected to perform an instrumental disinterested process in the name of a social and political aim. If the study guide has flourished within the context of English literary studies in the UK, it is because the genre has its roots in this strange mix of individualism and ‘free play’ with more or less strict ideological and institutional constraints. As discussed in chapters one and two, the tension within this situation is given expression in the study guide’s recommendation that the student internalise its protocols by way of promoting ostensibly independent thinking. This scenario resonates with Arnold’s insistence on the independent disciplining of the self (to counteract that ‘British habit’) within the governing structure of the canonical confines of *genuine* culture.

However suspicious Arnold might be of potential machinery for governing culture, such as an academy, his preferred instrument for the social mission is also heavily governed by machinery. As part of a Foucauldian ‘governmentalisation of the state’,²⁴ education can

²⁰ Matthew Arnold, ‘The Literary Influence of Academies’ in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R.H. Super, vol. 3, *Lectures and essays in criticism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), 236.

²¹ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 44.

²² Baldick, *Social Mission*, 45-46.

²³ Arnold, ‘Literary Influence of Academies’, 257.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘Governmentality’, in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991).

be viewed as firmly within the realms of instrumentalising civilisation. Matthew Shum, working within this perspective, views education as a ‘means of governance, with pragmatic rather than ideal aims’, which ‘has shown itself capable, despite obvious inequities, of making enormously beneficial gains in the social tutelage of mass populations’, and which ‘is not, and never has been, the embodiment of a “higher” or “deeper” principle of human development’.²⁵ Arnold must find a balance between culture and machinery in order to successfully utilise the instrumental workings of state education for his purposes. The individualism that lies at the base of the theory of aesthetic experience provides this bridge for Arnold. He must demand of pupils an individualistic work ethic, extrinsic to machinery, to maintain the inward focus of cultural self-cultivation.

The tension in Arnold’s move from the consciousness of individuals to the broader sphere of the social and political, did not go unnoticed in his own time. In the August 1867 issue of *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Henry Sidgwick writes:

Mr. Arnold assumes implicitly what, perhaps, should have been expressly avowed – that the study of perfection, as it forms itself in members of the human race, is naturally and primarily a study of the *individual’s* perfection, and only incidentally and secondarily a study of the *general* perfection of humanity [my emphasis].²⁶

A similar criticism was offered, from a religious perspective, by J. C. Shairp in 1870. Shairp claims that Arnold focuses too narrowly on individual self-improvement, and views this as a consequence of Arnold’s preference for culture over religion as the ultimate moralising ideal: ‘They who seek religion for culture-sake are æsthetic, not religious, and will never gain that grace which religion adds to culture, because they never can have the religion’.²⁷ Whilst a religious conception of culture would allow an ‘all-embracing bond of brotherhood’, Arnold’s narrow focus on self-advancement is likely to become ‘a principal of exclusion and isolation’.²⁸ Furthermore, Sidgwick feels that Arnold’s conception of culture is elitist. This is because Arnold confuses the actual conditions of culture with an ideal.²⁹ According to Sidgwick, Arnold requires that ‘all men, under all circumstances, should feel what some men, in some fortunate spheres, may truly feel’.³⁰ Due to this inherent

²⁵ Matthew Shum, ‘Culture and the Institution’, *Scutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* 2, no 1 (1997): 6.

²⁶ Henry Sidgwick, ‘The Prophet of Culture’, in *Matthew Arnold, Prose Writings: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 212.

²⁷ J.C. Shairp, *Culture and Religion in some of their Relations*, (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1876), 90.

²⁸ Shairp, *Culture and Religion*, 9.

²⁹ Sidgwick, *The Prophet*, 211.

elitism in Arnold's cultural project, the terms 'sweetness and light' have come to suggest, as Collini regrets, 'too much the mild uplift dispensed by that kind of wet do-gooder who never seems to have felt the pull of any real human appetites'.³¹ As his letters indicate, Arnold was ragged for his eccentric terminology by his peers, and addressed on one occasion as 'vir dulcissime et lucidissime'.³² Though uttered in jest, playful contemporary responses such as this nonetheless capture something of Sidgwick and Shairp's criticisms, converging with these in gesturing towards a problem in Arnold's extrapolation from the individual to the general, and a corresponding problem in his move from an ideal to the practical application of that ideal in the social sphere. Such a problem, writes Michael John Kooy, is 'the fate of a programme for "aesthetic education" when those responsible abandon their disinterestedness. In the control of such an elite, "cultivation" no longer serves an emancipatory function but rather a narrow ideological one'.³³

Arnold is an idealist, but at the same time, a pedagogue. As he declared to the Royal Academy in 1875: 'My life is not that of a man of letters but of an Inspector of schools'.³⁴ Arnold was, writes Ian Hunter,

a prototype of an increasingly familiar hybrid persona: the critical intellectual whose bureaucratic role is determined by their moral comportment, and whose practice of critique is inapplicable to the system in which they are employed, except as a prestigious model for a desired way of life.³⁵

Hunter emphasises that there is a bureaucratic side to the development of the discipline of English literature. In considering the importance of influential critics – such as Arnold – he reminds us that it is important to consider the actual circumstances of administration that govern the application of their ideas in education. According to Hunter, there is an habitual neglect in histories of the discipline of 'the "machinery" required to operationalize' the ideas of major critics who are viewed as ensuring the cultural realisation of 'man'.³⁶ Franklin Court provides a similar argument, claiming that Arnold is the object of an 'historical

³⁰ Sidgwick, *The Prophet*, 213.

³¹ Stefan Collini, *Arnold* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 83.

³² Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 82.

³³ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 174.

³⁴ Matthew Arnold, 'Appendix I: Three Public Speeches, 1873-1877', in *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 8, *Essays Religious and Mixed* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), 374.

³⁵ Ian Hunter, *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 168.

³⁶ Ian Hunter, 'Setting Limits to Culture', *New Formations* 4 (spring 1988): 106.

overemphasis' of the humanist myth, overshadowing historical aspects of the institutionalisation of English literature.³⁷ The critical reluctance to read Arnold in terms of the bureaucracy of historical discipline-formation, however, is an understandable adoption of Arnold's own perspective given that his own distrust of machinery is rooted in the 'self-governing rational principle'³⁸ of aesthetic experience. The principle stems from a Kantian "subjective universality" which stands outside any forms of social organisation'.³⁹ According to the same principle, Arnold's own role models opposed institutional machineries. Von Humboldt, for example, emphasised that the state should have no role in supervising the educational process because 'the freest development of human nature, directed as little as possible to ulterior civil relations should always be regarded as paramount in importance with respect to the culture of man in society'.⁴⁰ Schiller, too, held that culture should not be governed by civilisation because the ideal of culture requires individual agency. For example, Schiller did not embrace the idea of a national theatre, because its 'dependence upon personal interest and its self-proclaimed goal of instruction and improvement – in short, its utilitarian foundation – violates everything he deems integral to aesthetic experience'.⁴¹

The Kantian ideal of subjective universality in disinterested aesthetic experience is the extreme opposite of education as a form of administrative machinery. According to Hunter and Shum's shared argument, the discipline of English literature 'developed in the more modest and pragmatic conjuncture of governance – specifically the need to bring under controlled administration a recently modernized society which lacked organizing structures for the urban proletariat'.⁴² And so, they claim, the 'pedagogical apparatus made Matthew Arnold possible, not the other way around'.⁴³ Be that as it may, my claim is that Arnold's unprecedented pragmatic mediation between the ideal and its governance has been profoundly influential for the discipline; that the discipline's rationale lies neither in its

³⁷ Franklin Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 6-7.

³⁸ Hunter, *Rethinking the School*, 13.

³⁹ Shum, 'Culture and the Institution', 7.

⁴⁰ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, trans. Joseph Coulthard, Jun. (London: John Chapman, 1854), 67.

⁴¹ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 138.

⁴² Shum, 'Culture and the Institution', 7.

⁴³ Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 20.

disinterest nor in bureaucratic administration of mass populations, but in the tension between ideals of literary value and their practical pedagogical implementation. This tension has been described by Carol Atherton as a ‘disciplinary anxiety’, which still informs the teaching of English literature at secondary level today: ‘the most significant feature of these early debates about literary criticism – about its nature and methods, its underlying values and its social utility – is their persistence’.⁴⁴

The organisational structures of the education system bring Arnold’s idealism – based on post-Kantian notions of the necessary universality of subjective aesthetic experience – into conflict when faced with its administration within a conflicted class structure. Arnold’s move from aesthetic education as *theory* into the process of *implementing* this theory in the state school apparatus entails a pedagogical transmission problem. The theory of aesthetic education describes a necessary and ‘natural’ progression from culture as an internal state in the individual to a democracy homogenised by shared cultural values. This description of a transition from a private space to democracy in the form of a collection of public spaces does not give advice about how to get to that internal space in the first place. The political aim of democracy is, then, both separable from and dependent upon the pedagogical need to operationalise culture and to create a set of objective criteria that can be taught. Arnold’s social mission must account not just for the theory of aesthetic education, but also for its practical implementation. Likewise, the study guide’s rationale, which it inherits from Arnold, relates to the whole of this process. We can think of this problem in terms of how to govern autonomous aesthetic experience through pedagogical intervention, and how to bring something socially and politically productive out of that process. This set of circumstances resonates with the study guide’s project of guiding and governing the experience of the literary text for the instrumental end of self-improvement, reaching its full fruition in the neoliberal subject.

For aesthetic education as an abstract theory, the challenge of solving its pedagogical transmission problem is not as pressing as it was for Arnold because it avoids practical conflict with state education systems. Arnold’s models, such as Schiller, with his vague notions of ‘aesthetic educators’, or Coleridge, with his conception of non-state education at the hands of the ‘clerisy’,⁴⁵ do not go as far in trying to reconcile the theory of aesthetic education with that machinery. Whilst Schiller holds, for instance, that in his aesthetic state

⁴⁴ Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880 - 2002*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 7.

⁴⁵ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 167.

‘we exist both as individuals and as the genus’,⁴⁶ he seems to be ‘implying that the passage from the state of nature to the “Aesthetic State” is more or less natural, an irresistible development of humanity’.⁴⁷ As John Kooy points out, ‘the failure to think through in explicit terms the social implications of the theory of *Bildung*’, can mean that aesthetic experience ‘risks remaining the subjective appreciation of the beautiful’.⁴⁸ Arnold’s willingness to compromise his ideal within the systems of state school bureaucracy and administration, however, commits him to explaining the passage between subjective aesthetic experience and its practical implementation within a social project of education in a more direct way. Arnold fails to give a philosophically satisfactory account of that transition, and shares in the problem of reconciling ideal and practice. However, he goes much further than Schiller or Coleridge had done in attempting to provide practical solutions to this problem within a school setting. As Helen Small points out, critics who have looked to Arnold for ‘anti-instrumentalist arguments for the humanities’ have ‘tended, as a consequence, greatly to underplay the kind and extent of the concessions he made to “utility”’.⁴⁹ Indeed, Arnold’s engagement with the pragmatics of pedagogy and the constraints of administrating the ideal leads from idealism to the writing of *A Bible Reading*. His readiness to discipline his aesthetic ideals in terms of actual social conditions provides the rationale for this ‘proto-study guide’, and comes, later, to provide a strong influence on the motivation of the study guide genre itself.

***A Bible Reading for Schools* and the literature study guide: technologies of the self**

Arnold’s pragmatically motivated compromise of the ideal of subjective universality for the sake of his social mission marks the beginning of a tradition from which the study guide is a development. *A Bible Reading* can be understood as a technology of governing which exposes the difficult balance between the pedagogy of state education and the strong individualism which follows from the supposedly subjective universality of aesthetic education. The preface to *A Bible Reading* (the intended audience of the preface being the critic and the school teacher) provides us with a concrete expression of the Arnoldian project under discussion, insofar as it provides an insight into Arnold’s *practical* move from the

⁴⁶ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 146.

⁴⁷ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 151.

⁴⁸ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 148.

⁴⁹ Small, *Value of the Humanities*, 70.

individual to the social, and sheds light on his pragmatic choices in capacity both as pedagogue and as social critic. Arnold emphasises that *A Bible Reading* is not intended as a scholarly edition.⁵⁰ His aim is that of ‘enabling English school-children to read as a connected whole the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, without being frequently stopped by passages of which the meaning is almost or quite unintelligible’. The text is edited in accordance with a principle of accessibility for Victorian children in elementary schools, and to this end Arnold has selected ‘among the better meanings which have been offered for each of these passages, that which seemed the best’, presenting a text which does not ‘produce any sense of strangeness or interruption’.⁵¹

Arnold proclaims that *A Bible Reading* was the first publication of its kind, and he expresses regret at not having contributed such a pedagogical tool sooner. ‘In general’, he writes, ‘the scholars in our schools for the people come in contact with English literature in a mere fragmentary way, by short pieces or by odds and ends’.⁵² For over twenty years, he says, he has ‘got his living by inspecting schools for the people, has gone in and out among them, has seen that the power of letters never reaches them at all and that the whole study of letters is thereby discredited and its power called into question’, and yet, this school edition is his first attempt to ‘remedy this state of things’.⁵³ The preface indicates clearly that Arnold is eager to resolve his pedagogical transmission problem through the use of learning technologies designed to allow the reader access to the aesthetic experience of literary texts. Moreover, Arnold published *A Bible Reading for Schools* with the intention of inaugurating a genre. He writes of himself (in the third person) and his hopes for the future of *A Bible Reading*: ‘Even if what he does cannot be of service at once, owing to special prejudices and difficulties, yet these prejudices and difficulties years are almost sure to dissipate, and it may be of service hereafter’.⁵⁴

Arnold’s hopes for a future genre based on *A Bible Reading* would come to be met by the literature study guide. In 1937, several decades after Arnold’s initial attempt at founding a genre, his gesture was repeated by the series *Brodie’s Chosen English Texts*. The series shared the pedagogical aims of *A Bible Reading*, as well as its understanding of how

⁵⁰ Ruth apRoberts gives an account of Arnold’s student edition of Isaiah compared with the contemporary scholarly edition of T.K. Cheyne and the English Revised Version in *Arnold and God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

⁵¹ Matthew Arnold, *A Bible Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israel’s Restoration* (London: Macmillan & co., 1889), v.

⁵² Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, ix.

⁵³ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xii.

⁵⁴ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xii.

those aims could be achieved. Between 1937 and 1956, the early *Brodie's* publications replicated the format of Arnold's publication, giving a school edition of a literary text and an introductory note on that text, supplying the reader with background information. And like *A Bible Reading*, they also provided clarificatory notes to each chapter, with a short summary. In the late 1950s, however, not long after the implementation of the A-level system, James Brodie Ltd stopped that series of school editions, *Brodie's Chosen English Texts*, in favour of the first fully-fledged UK study guides, *Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts*. In the shift from the *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* edition to the *Brodie's Notes* study guide, the text itself was removed and the pedagogical apparatus honed and bolstered in order to form the first British study guide series. Nevertheless, the change in format did not disrupt the continuity of purpose and strategy which links the study guide proper to Arnold's proto-guide. Rather, in this compressed form, the study guide emerged as a distillation of Arnold's pedagogical purpose.

The continuity between *A Bible Reading* and the study guide becomes starkly apparent if we compare their respective declarations of intent. The following quotation from the preface to *A Bible Reading*, when compared with a quotation from 1937 in one of the first student editions in *Brodie's Chosen English Texts*, will serve to show the continuity between Arnold's school edition and the literature study guide, demonstrating the endurance of the problem of combining idealist aesthetic education and pragmatic pedagogy:

Now the learner in our schools for the people, who has the bare text of a common Bible and nothing more, may perceive that there is something grand in this passage, but he cannot possibly understand it; and this is due partly to the want of explanations, partly to the arrangement, partly to obscurity in the translation. He requires to be told first, as a learner would be told before reading an ode of Pindar, what it is all about; he requires to have the passage separated for him from that with which it has no connexion; and he requires to have the text made much clearer, both in its words and in its punctuation.⁵⁵

Here, Arnold gives his pedagogical rationale for the publication of *A Bible Reading*. His edition of Isaiah is pragmatically designed to meet the pedagogical challenges of the encounter between the uneducated reader and the many complexities of the text by guiding the student's reading, offering clarity and contextual information. The rationale outlined here is clearly shared by the earliest edition of *Brodie's Chosen English Texts*. The spirit of the following statement is strikingly similar to Arnold's:

The abundance of complex, inexplicit passages, and the wealth of classical allusions prevent the ordinary reader from grasping the full meaning of what is read, and are apt to confuse those who wish to study it in detail. To assist in overcoming some of these difficulties this Edition is published.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xv.

⁵⁶ Alfred E. Ikin, ed., *Milton: Paradise Lost Book I*, Brodie's Chosen English Texts (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1937), n.pag.

Here, Arnold's 'learner in our schools for the people' has become 'the ordinary reader', and Pindar's ode, 'classical allusions'. The analogy between the two passages is apparent. Both publications are intended for use within the context of state education, and thus they display a concern with aiding student reading by making the text itself more accessible, softening the harsh encounter between unprepared readers and difficulties such as classical allusions and complex formulations which hinder 'correct' appreciation.

Ultimately, this continuity between Arnold's *Bible Reading* and the study guide should not surprise us. After all, as argued in chapters one and two, the study guide is an expression of something which is happening within liberal humanist pedagogy. For the discipline of English literature, the study guide is an object of discomfort because it seemingly represents a cynical and calculating engagement with literary values. This tendency towards instrumentality has been brought out and externalised by the study guide's participation in the cultivation of a neoliberal work ethic in learners, but the study guide itself has always been instrumental. Having grown out of the split between an ideal of the humanising power of literature and the institutionalisation required to teach that ideal, the study guide's rationale has continuously been one of transmitting disinterested values in an interested and targeted way. Hence, the study guide expresses tensions and difficulties that lie at the heart of the discipline of English.

One point of discontinuity between the study guide and *A Bible Reading*, though, is that whilst the latter was intended for use within the state school, the modern study guide operates independently of school institutions. In the previous chapter, I argued that Widdowson and Wotton's accounts of the study guide were misinformed due to a conflation of study guides and school textbooks. Their misconception, as we have seen, was based on an incomplete understanding of the study guide's participation in *both* liberal humanism and the neoliberal ethos, and of how the former comes to operate as handmaiden to the latter. However, in Arnold's 'proto-study guide' – intended as a school textbook – the balance between liberal humanism and instrumentalism is reversed: here, instrumentality operates in aid of Arnold's social mission. Indeed, Arnold is resistant to instrumentalism in education, and holds that there are 'dangers in cramming and racing little boys for competitive examinations'.⁵⁷ The modern – neoliberal – study guide, conversely, is motivated primarily by its 'exam function'. So, as the study guide comes to take on this excessively instrumental function, it also starts to operate separately from the collective project of the state school: a project conceived of by Arnold as one of aesthetic education. The independent function and

⁵⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 8.

the strong presence of the neoliberal ethos in the modern study guide, however, is ultimately made possible by a certain liberal humanist ideal of the centrality to the educational process of the learner's individual agency. The individualism of that ideology opens up a space for the study guide as a technology of the self. *A Bible Reading*, conversely, is intended as a technology of state governance insofar as it is designed to be part of a state school education. But because Arnold's pedagogical project hinges on that ideal of individual agency – on the individual's duty towards self-cultivation – it seems that *A Bible Reading*, too, is a technology of the self.

Compromising the ideal: an education in improved taste

A Bible Reading's pedagogical concern with the accessibility of texts follows from Arnold's project of aesthetic education, but it seems, at the same time, a compromised preparation for that *Bildung*. Arnold's 'policy of disengagement from practical politics and movement into serener realms of sweetness and light [...] is designed, in the long term, precisely to "shape the world all the better"'.⁵⁸ Arnold is aware, however, that this shaping requires a certain negotiation with measures: 'An ounce of practice, they say, is better than a pound of theory; and certainly one may talk forever of the wonder-working power of letters, and yet produce no good at all, unless one really puts people in the way of feeling this power'.⁵⁹ As John Willinsky points out, Arnold's project has two different levels – the state school, in which literature was to give its civilising and humanising effect as a necessary prelude to *Bildung*, and the fuller and more desirable level of *Bildung* itself: 'he had promised the Privy council what amounted to moral reformation through poetry', but culture was to be provided on a higher level of abstraction 'for those who were, as Arnold imagined it, right and ready'.⁶⁰ Whilst literature, according to Arnold, is apt for the project of aesthetic education precisely because it gives aesthetic experience naturally and spontaneously, in other words, because it is self-teaching, its 'influence seems to need in the recipient a certain refinement of nature at the outset in order to make itself felt'.⁶¹ Arnold's double-layered process of cultivation 'provides a credo for the English teacher that might read – to civilize until right is ready and

⁵⁸ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 23.

⁵⁹ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xii.

⁶⁰ Willinsky, 'Arnold's Legacy', 357.

⁶¹ Matthew Arnold, *Reports on Elementary Schools, 1852 – 1882* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1908), 250-51.

then to entrust with the disinterested play of ideas and the criticism of life'.⁶² This project of social reform requires a long-term process of 'filtering down' from the upper realms of culture to the masses – but not before they have been 'softened' and 'humanised' and are in readiness to receive culture. This is crucial, because until the masses are ready to receive them harmoniously, cultural ideas are 'noxious' and 'impair the culture of the world'.⁶³ Their introduction must be gentle so as not to jeopardise the project of mass *Bildung*. In this way, then, Arnold seeks to avoid the 'cheapening' effect of what I described in chapter two as the 'trickle-down' process from criticism into study guides.

Arnold's project of making Isaiah accessible is a part of this necessary *softening*. It gives an insight into Arnold's awareness of the pragmatics required by actual circumstance: *A Bible Reading* takes the bull by the horns and admits that the universal, yet individual, aesthetic experience which culture requires is not 'naturally' universally accessible, but is needful of much preparation through the machinery of state education. In his move from the ideal to the actual, Arnold turns his ideal from an elitist construct into a tangible project for social reform.

Because the goal of mass disinterest cannot be achieved without pedagogical technologies of the self, designed for the masses and tailored to their needs, *A Bible Reading* is shaped according to a compromise in the relation between these needs and the ideal process towards culture. The choice of Isaiah is itself a compromise. Not yet *softened*, the children of the working classes could not achieve the ultimate liberal education which a knowledge of Greek and Latin letters would allow. They need to read literature in their own language, and they need a familiar frame of cultural reference. 'Bible names can reach their imagination', writes Arnold, and 'kindle trains of thought and remembrance in them. The elements with which the literature of Greece and Rome conjures, have no power on them; the elements with which the literature of the Bible conjures, have'. Moreover, Arnold holds that a liberal arts education and instruction in classics is necessary also for the understanding of literature in the mother tongue because of the heavy use of classical reference and allusion in English literature:

[T]his preparation the scholars in our secondary schools [...] have; all their training is such as to give it them, and it has thus passed into all the life and speech of what are called the cultivated classes. The people are without it; and how much of English literature is, therefore, almost unintelligible to the people, or at least to the people in their commencements of learning,—to the children of the people,—we can hardly perhaps enough convince ourselves.⁶⁴

⁶² Willinsky, 'Arnold's Legacy', 359.

⁶³ Matthew Arnold, 'The Bishop and the Philosopher' in *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 3, *Lectures and Essays in Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 44.

⁶⁴ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, ix.

The inaccessibility of texts in Latin and Ancient Greek as well as of England's own literary tradition means, for Arnold, that 'through the Bible only have the people much chance of getting at poetry, philosophy, and eloquence'.⁶⁵ *A Bible Reading* is written in order to provide a (hitherto non-existent) comprehensible text in order to encourage cultural empowerment: 'if the first stage in feeling this power is, as we have seen, to apprehend certain great works as connected wholes, then it must be said that there are hardly any means at present for enabling young learners to get at this power through the Bible'.⁶⁶ Arnold, then, not only admits, but emphasises the pragmatic need for enlarging readers' horizons in preparation for sweetness and light. Comprehension is possible only where the equipment of notions and of previous information qualifies it.⁶⁷ The Bible's already established place within the horizons of the young working class reader makes it apt for this purpose. It is Arnold's only acceptable resource, because, as he states in *Culture and Anarchy*: 'it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light'.⁶⁸ By way of a compromise within this compromise, moreover, Arnold selects the Deutero-Isaiah from the many parts of the Bible because he considers it, alongside the book of Job, the most *literary* part of the Bible – and as such the preferred vehicle for the *softening* of the masses in preparation for their socially useful cultivation.⁶⁹

The principle of *softening*, moreover, is noticeable in *A Bible Reading*'s treatment of its text. In order to prepare the ground for cultural cultivation, Arnold modifies the text for pedagogic purposes. At the same time, however, he also wants to preserve the aesthetic value of the text by offering it as an uninterrupted whole. Hence, Arnold understands the question of how to present 'these chapters to a young learner so that he may apprehend them'⁷⁰ in terms of 'how to apply a remedy without innovating overmuch'.⁷¹ His answer is the removal of the scholarly apparatus surrounding the text. Thus, he adopts a mode of presentation 'where the numbers of the chapters are marked at the side and do not interpose a break

⁶⁵ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, x.

⁶⁶ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xi.

⁶⁷ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, viii.

⁶⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 52.

⁶⁹ In the preface to *A Bible Reading*, Arnold states: 'The Hebrew language and genius, it is admitted by common consent, are seen in the Book of Isaiah at their perfection; this has naturally had its effect on the English translation, which nowhere perhaps rises to such beauty as in this Book' (*A Bible Reading*, xiii).

⁷⁰ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xiv.

⁷¹ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xvi.

between chapter and chapter'. Similarly, the 'division of the verses', are also numbered 'at the side of the page, not in the body of the verse', and do not 'thrust themselves forcibly on the attention'.⁷² The Bible text is further simplified by the removal of 'italics, signs, references, and all apparatus of this sort, which readers such as we have in view hardly ever understand, and are more distracted than helped by'. In this way, Arnold hopes 'to exhibit this series of chapters in a way to give a clue to their connexion and sense, yet without making them look too odd and novel'.⁷³ Similarly, the chapter summaries and notes are stripped of any scholarly apparatus which might distract the reader from aesthetic experience because they 'are written for those who are not ripe for weighing conflicting interpretations, and whose one great need is a clear view of the whole'.⁷⁴ Thus organised in relation to the principle of softening, Arnold's proto-study guide codifies the Bible text by presenting a version which appears more spontaneous and *less* codified than the original text(s). In this way, *A Bible Reading* can be seen *both* as proto-study guide and *anti-study guide*. This curious conflict within *A Bible Reading* reflects the strong tension within Arnold's social mission project. The remarkable endurance of that conflict, moreover, remains apparent in the modern study guide's rhetorical disavowals of its own function.⁷⁵

If Arnold's Isaiah compromises and customises his ideal of culture to fit actual social circumstances, this is insofar as it endeavours to carry out a transmission of the ideal into social reality that is far from unproblematic. The move from aesthetic and moral ideal to actual social implementation treats the process of self-cultivation as a product: disinterest becomes a goal, an aim. Whilst liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy is always thus instrumental, and the children of the privileged, like the children of 'the people', will often have acquired their culture through crudely instrumental educational methods, the context of aesthetic education as a social mission, by formulating its determinate and pragmatic political goals in ways that are only partially aligned with the interests of 'the people', brings out the inherent instrumentalism in humanist pedagogy and renders it especially visible. Schiller, like Arnold, had moved towards the view 'that "aesthetic education" is not just the means of achieving the good life but the goal itself, that it is to be a permanent state, the end-point or completion of human moral progress'.⁷⁶ H.G. Gadamer describes this move in

⁷² Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xvi.

⁷³ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xvii.

⁷⁴ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xxxiv.

⁷⁵ For more in this point, see chapter one pp. 35-38 and chapter five pp. 132-41.

⁷⁶ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 149.

Schiller as a change from education *through* art to education *to* art.⁷⁷ Thus, according to Gadamer, ‘through “aesthetic differentiation” the work loses its place and the world to which it belongs insofar as it belongs instead to aesthetic consciousness’.⁷⁸ Because Arnold’s take on aesthetic education is so closely modelled on the post-Kantian aesthetic tradition, Gadamer’s objection can also be applied to Arnold: due to his emphasis on aesthetic experience as differentiated from that of the social world, art’s claim to truth is abandoned and aesthetic education becomes little more than ‘an education in improved taste’.⁷⁹ I have previously introduced the two, seemingly contradictory, but ultimately reconcilable, impulses which govern the study guide as a technology of the self: a pragmatic pursuit of self-interest, converging since the 1970s and 1980s with neoliberalism, and liberal humanism. As a liberal humanist technology of the self, the study guide can be understood as a manual for obtaining culture and taste. This set of circumstances will be the main object of the next chapter; however, it is relevant here to draw attention to the fact that the move Gadamer observes from process to product in aesthetic education marks the theoretical moment at which the ground is laid for the study guide to develop its mode as a manual for taste. More specifically, the *practical* ground is laid in Arnold’s necessary programmatisation of his ideal through technologies, such as *A Bible Reading*, which speak to the individual pupil’s work ethic as well as the readiness of the masses to be ‘humanised’.

For Arnold, pedagogical technologies are necessary to enable a seemingly spontaneous process of cultivation which, he believes, would have taken place ‘naturally’ had it not been for the need for *softening* which occasions the technologies in the first place. Thus Arnold believed the reading of the chapters of his more accessible Isaiah could sink into the mind and be understood there in such a way as to make ‘more manifest [...] their connexion with universal history, the key they offer to it, the truth of the ideal they propose for it.’⁸⁰ The study of a single great work of literature can, according to Arnold, end with ‘giving us a hold upon the history of the human spirit’.⁸¹ He repeats this phrase in lamenting the difficulty of rationalising literature through teaching technologies:

⁷⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2006), 74.

⁷⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 76.

⁷⁹ John Kooy, *Aesthetic Education*, 150.

⁸⁰ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xxxv.

⁸¹ Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, xxxvi.

The several natural sciences, too, from their limited and definite character, admit better of being advantageously presented by short text-books than such a wide and indefinite subject-matter,—nothing less than the whole history of the human spirit,—as that which belongs to letters.⁸²

A Bible Reading is an edition of the literary text rather than a ‘short text-book’, and as such it also differs from the targeted instrumentality of the modern study guide in its capacity as revision tool. If what is required to start the process of culture is a *touchstone* (in this case the text of Isaiah), then, assumes Arnold, all he needs to do is give the text as is, but with a few small compromises in the edition to make the text more accessible. After all, Arnold holds that it will not do to ‘try to give the masses [...] an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way [you] think proper for the actual condition of the masses’.⁸³ This crucial difference represents the limit of Arnold’s pragmatic compromise. *A Bible Reading* seeks to offer its reader the text, keeping what is perceived as the intrinsic value of that text intact so that its objective aesthetic value can begin its work upon her mind. The study guide, of course, encourages a more rationalising and compartmentalising treatment of texts. The divergence of the study guide’s approach from Arnold’s is evident most explicitly in its plot-summary structure where, as discussed in chapter two, *fabula* is given logical priority over *syuzhet*.

However much the spontaneous and seemingly natural effect of Arnold’s touchstones seems to clash with the form of the modern day study guide, we can nonetheless see the study guide as an expression of Arnold’s project. It is with the commodification of the process of culture that culture becomes obtainable for external aims. Arnold’s move from an education through art to an education to art, involves commodification of culture on two distinct levels: firstly the process of disinterest becomes a means to a social end, and secondly, culture is conceived as codifiable in a set of criteria or rules, the kind of objectified knowledge that a manual might be able to describe. Arnold’s specific use of touchstones is consistent with this mode of codification because it implies a distinct instrumentalisation of culture: ‘there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one’s mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry’.⁸⁴ Thus Arnold assumes the objective value of *Bildung*, and also assumes that such value lies in particular objects or manifestations of culture. When the value is placed in

⁸² Arnold, *A Bible Reading*, vi-vii.

⁸³ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 52.

⁸⁴ Matthew Arnold, ‘The Study of Poetry’, in *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 9, *English Literature and Irish Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1973), 168.

specific cultural objects rather than in the subjective process of culture, the ongoing critical stance of culture turns into a set of criteria for taste, that is, for the ‘correct’ appreciation of these objects. And when literary works are treated as touchstones, *pars pro toto*, which come to stand in for the whole of culture, this requires that the works are given the sort of response which will position them in certain given relations to that whole. In other words, with Arnold’s objectification of culture, – his use of touchstones –, his social mission is already on the way to inciting stock-responses. Arnold was, after all, ‘filled with a sense of social responsibility that could not truly risk a free play of the mind in the education of others’.⁸⁵ Arnold requires an arsenal of ‘*real* sweetness and *real* light’, but because of the individual character of culture, culture *per se* cannot be taught. There can only be institutions teaching canons, thus positioning the authority of culture. Some commentators have gone so far as to take Arnold’s instrumentalisation of culture to be reminiscent of Plato’s *Republic* in its instrumental and censorious use of poetry for the end of moulding the souls of children.⁸⁶

Arnold’s social mission has had a decisive influence on the development on the discipline of English literature; his social project and its fundamental individualism informs both the discipline’s canon and its pedagogical methods. The exam-orientated function of the study guide is, as I have argued, dependent upon liberal humanist ideals of the individual, and this goes hand in hand with liberal humanist ideals about literary value. Such literary value is tied up with the subjective universality of aesthetic education as the occasion for a broader social project, and it is in this way that the humanistic ideal of individual agency comes to inform the exam-function. A humanistic conception of individual agency comes to the fore in the study guide’s ambivalent relation to its own humanism, exhibited by the tension between its humanist impulse and its targeted instrumentalising. The study guide’s humanist impulse is of course a direct inheritance from Arnold’s social mission project, but curiously, that project also makes possible the instrumentalising impulse of the study guide through its pragmatic engagement with ideals of utility. This curious situation provides a platform for the influence of neoliberalism and other rationalising ideologies within the study guide. The study guide repeats the gesture of Arnold’s disciplining of the self for the purposes of obtaining culture, and provides space there for the disciplining of the self which the neoliberal ethos implies. Thus, in the study guide, neoliberalism comes to play the part of a more cynical version of Arnold’s democratic empowerment. This is possible because Arnold implemented individualism – the internal locus of his project of empowerment – into an institutional programme, making it amenable to education as an individual good.

⁸⁵ Willinsky, ‘Arnold’s Legacy’, 358.

⁸⁶ Willinsky, ‘Arnold’s Legacy’, 352.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the implementation of Arnold's cultural process of *Bildung* into the machinery of the state education system requires a pragmatic compromise of culture's disinterested ideal, and that the study guide genre finds its earliest expression within that compromise. Moreover, the study guide's liberal humanist impulse, which it inherits from Arnold's social mission project, turns out to be the source of the study guide's instrumentality. Evolving from *A Bible Reading* – a technology of the self for the purposes of cultural cultivation – the study guide maintains and develops Arnold's humanist ideal of individual agency. The study guide, then, has always been informed by an instrumentality based on that ideal of individual agency. Thus, the space within the study guide which neoliberalism comes to occupy lends itself to that purpose on account of a pre-existing affinity. However, the study guide's own discomfort at this affinity continues to find expression in its inherent ambivalence between that instrumental tendency and its (seemingly) disinterested humanistic impulse.

For Arnold, this same ambivalence comes to compromise his cultural ideal. For his social mission to work, the whole population of Britain must be given access to the cultural process of *Bildung*, and this, of course, requires forms of programmatisation which collide with his initial notion of disinterest. This requirement leads Arnold towards an inevitable situation, which he nonetheless seeks to avoid, of having to objectify culture by codifying the study of literature for pedagogic purposes. *A Bible Reading* is put forth as the result of a pragmatic reworking of aesthetic education within the necessary constraints of machinery. As a 'proto-study guide', *A Bible Reading* represents the importance, for the development of the study guide genre, of Arnold's readiness to discipline his ideal in terms of actual social conditions. As such, the genre can be said to grow out of the tension between the demands of utility and the ideal of disinterest.

As well as providing the rationale for the study guide genre, that tension has informed the pedagogy of English literature as a discipline more broadly. As Gerald Graff puts it, the 'union of Arnoldian humanism and scientific research which gave birth to academic literary studies was never free from strain'.⁸⁷ Arnold's humanism had to be disciplined into a set of practical principles if English literature was to function as a coherent teaching discipline. According to Atherton, such principles would include 'what the study of English literature

⁸⁷ Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 3.

was to involve, the kinds of knowledge it was to produce and why these were to be considered valuable, within a wider social context as well as in academic terms'.⁸⁸ To this day, however, the difficulties surrounding the interest/disinterest problem have yet to be resolved, and the tension continues to haunt literary studies. According to Graff, the fragmented character of the university English department has lent humanism the opportunity of covering up its internal problems by very rarely confronting them, causing a situation in which external forces are blamed for problems that are ultimately internal to the discipline.⁸⁹ In the analogous situation of A-level English, the study guide's instrumental function is viewed as separate from and opposed to the discipline's ideals of literary value. What this suggests is that the reason why the study guide is so often disparaged and disdained is that it reminds us of the problems we are trying to cover up.

⁸⁸ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 3.

⁸⁹ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 9.

Chapter 4

The Study Guide as a Manual for Taste: Practical Criticism, Cultural Capital, and Disciplinary ‘Trade Secrets’

In its act of instrumentally codifying literary texts, the literature study guide is far removed from immediate aesthetic experience. This chapter argues that, as such, the study guide offers what is – for liberal humanist aesthetics – an uncomfortable revelation; that the possession of culture is not a natural or spontaneous condition, but one which requires the internalisation of a cultural code. Indeed, this chapter will endeavour to illustrate that the study guide’s reminder that culture requires cultivation across the stratified social sphere becomes more visible, but also increasingly repressed, with the polarisation of elite culture and mass culture that separates Arnold’s social mission from its reception at Cambridge in the 1920s and 1930s. I will argue that this polarisation intensifies the rationale for the study guide as a tool for socialisation; the exclusivity of the in-group of high culture, when opposed to low culture, complicates the project of mass literacy and increases the difficulty of socialisation into that group. That polarity furthermore lends the study guide genre its peculiarly conflicted form: its self-presentation as a pop-cultural appropriation of high culture.

Arnold’s pedagogical transmission problem of how to codify literature for social purposes without destroying its disinterested aesthetic value, now comes to be intensified through the increased exclusivity of the social mission in the hands of I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis. The covert elitism of Arnold’s egalitarian social project, which posed the interests and values of the educated classes as normative standards, becomes more overt when the culture of the labouring classes, with the advent of mass literacy and popular media, comes for the first time to be a social and economic power significant enough to challenge the hegemony of elite culture. The development of mass culture thus comes to split the notion of culture. This brings new challenges in the form of a conflict *within* culture between high and low culture. Arnold’s humanism had placed literature in the centre of secular modern culture, and the critics who developed his social mission now viewed themselves as the guardians of culture against the threats of – in Arnoldian terms – increasingly sophisticated machinery. And whilst these critics maintain that Arnold’s conception of culture still has significant potential as a social remedy, mass culture is viewed as part of the machinery which threatens that culture. Thus, culture needs protecting by an

elite minority which has lost faith, not in the humanising power of culture, but in the readiness of the people to receive culture's humanising effects.

One effect of this distrust would seem to be that it exacerbates the tensions involved in the idea that 'good' culture (i.e. high culture) is the 'natural' possession of a certain elite group, whilst the masses require *socialisation* into the cultural milieu of this elite in order to access the humanising benefits of high culture. At the same time, however, Richards and the Leavises seem to fetishise the notion of immediate aesthetic appreciation. This tension between the in-group character of taste and its supposed immediacy echoes the collision in Arnold between the post-Kantian notion that aesthetic experience involves an immediate – and universal – disinterested effect, and a pragmatic concern about socialisation into culture in state schools. At Cambridge in the 1920s and 1930s, Arnold's concern to provide culture for the masses has turned into a matter of preventing the negative effects of the masses' *own* culture. For the Leavises, mass culture introduces a conflict of values between two groups: an elite cultural minority and 'the herd'.¹ As the chapter will elaborate, the development of the method of practical criticism seems to exacerbate this tension further, by encouraging the removal of the contextual scaffolding which might allow for institutionalised education to provide a sort of surreptitious socialisation into taste – the values of the cultural elite. With the introduction of the practical criticism examination, the need for a manual for taste becomes all the more apparent.

Thus, I will show that the developments in literary criticism at Cambridge in this period, which were to have a lasting effect on the discipline's sense of identity in subsequent years, have two effects which directly influence the growth of the study guide genre: (1) they crystallise the Arnoldian conception of culture which opens up the possibility of the study guide, and make the need for it all the more acute; whilst at the same time (2) they contribute strongly to lowering the status of pop-cultural tools such as the study guide. Throughout this chapter's discussion of the study guide's role as cultural mediator between the relatively separate social spheres of mass culture and high culture, and the conflicted position of its social mission rationale within that social configuration, I shall be drawing upon ideas formulated by Pierre Bourdieu in his work on education and cultural capital, in which culture's role in the legitimation and redistribution of social differences is a point of

¹ This term is used by Q.D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1939), and by F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson in *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964). The term derives from the sociological theory set out in W. Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

departure.² Bourdieu holds that the denial of interested, or functional, elements within ‘the sacred sphere of culture’ implies ‘an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane’. Hence, ‘art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences’.³ The study guide’s unspoken confrontation of the interest/disinterest problem – the particular disciplinary anxiety of English literary studies – makes it a manual for the mediation of such social differences. The study guide’s unintentional foregrounding of the discipline’s inconsistency at this sore point will be discussed towards the close of the chapter, where I shall address Gerald Graff’s account of the internal problems of English literature as an academic teaching discipline.

Practical criticism: an intellectual trade secret

Despite his efforts to reconcile theory and practice, Arnold fails to set out a detailed and specific account of what his process of *Bildung* might involve. Instead, as Carol Atherton points out, he adopts a strategy of ‘assuming that the skilled critic will simply recognise what he is referring to without needing it to be defined, almost as if he is protecting what Baldick has described as an “intellectual trade secret”’.⁴ The discipline’s continued protection of such ‘secrets’ provides the study guide with its rationale as a manual for taste, or, as a means to internalise the cultural assumptions required for successful socialisation into literary culture. The study guide genre, which grows out of Arnold’s attempt to move from secrecy to shared experience – to open that secret up to everyone – runs into conflict with practical criticism, a critical approach which strengthens rather than resolves the rarefication of culture as belonging to those already initiated. The emergence of mass culture, which followed the expansion of the reading public generated by late nineteenth-century educational reforms, prompted what John Carey describes as a modernist ambition ‘to exclude these newly educated (or “semi-educated”) readers [and] to preserve the intellectual’s seclusion from the

² Bourdieu’s case studies in *Distinction* are intended as useful beyond the particular case of French society, and valid ‘no doubt, for every stratified society’ (Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice [Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996], xii).

³ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 7.

⁴ Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880 - 2002*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 70; Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 30.

“mass”⁵. The notion of a cultural elite who are opposed to popular culture has played a key role in the discipline’s perpetuation of its trade secrets. The idea is strongly present in the work of Richards and the Leavises, and affects the practical criticism approach with which these critics are associated. The approach, which was developed at Cambridge, soon became central in the teaching of English literature, both at secondary and tertiary levels. Practical criticism was, writes Francis Mulhern, ‘naturalized as the technically necessary approach to literary language’;⁶ but as Christopher Hilliard points out, practical criticism was a teaching method which reflected a critical method: ‘an exercise whose end (heightened powers of discrimination) was coextensive with its means (discriminating between good and bad writing)’.⁷ In short, practical criticism was designed, in part, to aid the student in distinguishing high from low culture. As Ben Knights describes it, ‘[i]nitiation into “the minority” was in fact a form of secular conversion narrative’.⁸

The practical criticism method derives its name from I.A. Richards’s book, *Practical Criticism* (1929). Here, Richards records the results of an experiment which was to instigate a tradition of close reading that is still a force to be reckoned with in UK teaching institutions. The experiment asked for immediate responses to poetry, removed from its contexts, in an attempt to isolate the reader’s immediate encounter with the text. In this way, Richards sought to diagnose how flawed responses are brought about. The aim of Richards’ project was to liberate readers from the distractions of habitual preconceptions, critical, emotional, social, cultural, and not least political. However, he refused to let go of the liberal humanist aesthetic idea that certain responses are necessary and *correct*. In other words, the individual subject is important for Richards as the site in which the realisation of aesthetic value occurs. That value, however, can only be realised insofar as it is not disturbed by the subjectivity of individual readers. This idea involves the assumption that the cultural knowledge required for immediate response to the text can be taken for granted as universal. Thus, ‘a personal response must comply with canonical interpretation, or be simply wrong’.⁹ In *Principles of*

⁵ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), vii.

⁶ Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of ‘Scrutiny’* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 328.

⁷ Christopher Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The ‘Scrutiny’ Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 37.

⁸ Ben Knights, ‘English on Its Borders’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline, Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Niall Gildea, Helena Goodwyn, Megan Kitching and Helen Tyson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 18.

⁹ Andrew Goodwyn and Kate Findlay, ‘I.A. Richards and the Paradox of Practical Criticism: A Response to David W. West’, *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education* 10, no. 1 (2003): 102.

Literary Criticism, Richards asserts the unfortunate, but ostensibly *necessary*, nature of his elitism:

The expert in matters of taste is in an awkward position when he differs from the majority. He is forced to say, in effect, 'I am better than you. My taste is more refined, my nature more cultured, you will do well to become more like me than you are'. It is not his fault that he has to be so arrogant. He may, and usually does, disguise the fact as far as possible, but his claim to be heard as an expert depends upon the truth of these assumptions.¹⁰

The perhaps most potent indicator of an *inexpert* engagement with culture, moreover, is the stock response, denoting, in Richards's formulation, a flawed, preconditioned interpretation of poetry. The stock response is seen to be impeding the genuine, and healthy, experience of poetry – and reality – which elite culture, conversely, is taken to facilitate. Thus, in Baldick's description: the 'great majority of people are assumed to be caught up in a fantasy world of "stock responses", stereotyped ideas, and emotional attitudes fixed for them by the mass media'.¹¹ Thus, Richards, like Arnold, locates culture – or the lack thereof – in the mind of the individual. Baldick characterises Richards's critical project as a 'large-scale exercise in mental health', which 'approaches the culture of the minority as a problem of individual psychology (indeed, psychiatry), associating widespread "stock responses" with emotional immaturity and inhibition'.¹² In *Practical Criticism*, Richards's main focus is on stock responses in inferior interpretations of canonical poems. His contention, moreover, that stock responses may also be elicited by inferior poems – which 'come home to a majority of readers with a minimum of trouble',¹³ – formed the basis for the Leavisite notion that advertising deliberately exploited the stock response in 'an unprecedented use of applied psychology'.¹⁴ The idea, shared by Richards and the Leavises, that the stock response expresses a social problem of individual psychology, is evident also in *Fiction and the Reading Public*, where Q.D. Leavis claims that the bestseller novel, which promotes such abnormal responses, leads to 'maladjustment in actual life';¹⁵ and so 'becomes less a case for the literary critic than for the psychologist'.¹⁶

¹⁰ I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1924), 36-37.

¹¹ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 139.

¹² Baldick, *Social Mission*, 141.

¹³ I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1930), 245.

¹⁴ F.R. Leavis, *For Continuity* (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1933), 22.

¹⁵ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 54.

¹⁶ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 164.

The stock response comes about ‘when insufficient experience is theoretically elaborated into a system that hides the real world from us’.¹⁷ Crucially, this situation cannot be remedied through critical or theoretical strategies, but only through *experience* itself: ‘The only corrective in all cases must be a closer contact with reality, either directly, through experience of actual things, or mediately through other minds which are in closer contact’.¹⁸ The strong antipathy between practical criticism’s isolated textual approach to teaching literature and the targeted approach of the study guide as extrinsic apparatus hinges on this notion that stock responses can only be countered by immersion in immediate experience, or in the aesthetic experience of poetry (the record of the immediate experience of another), and not through any form of codified formula. The practical criticism examination, then, paradoxically represents a systematic codification of a resistance to codification, representing, at the same time, a rigorous method of literary pedagogy (interest) and a preference for immediate experience over context or theory (disinterest). In this sense, the method of practical criticism reflects the way in which Arnold’s *Bible Reading* can be seen – as discussed in the previous chapter – as *both* proto-study guide *and* anti-study guide.

Richards’s analysis of the stock response as a withdrawal from genuine, immediate experience, which came to be shared by the Leavises, is influenced by the post-Kantian notion of the aesthetic as subjective yet objectively necessary. For Richards, the role of culture is subsumed entirely by the idea that its value consists in being closer to the real than we commonly are, and thus the competence of readers in accessing that value is vital for culture’s realisation. Richards’s identification of culture with the real resonates with Arnold’s view that we can reach truth, as Baldick puts it, by ‘looking hard and straight at the object, not by allowing our attention to be distracted by systems’.¹⁹ The practical criticism examination, which withdrew what was perceived as distracting contextual information, repeats the pedagogical transmission problem involved in the ‘disinterested’ approach to literature, or as Bourdieu would describe it, the ‘myth of an innate taste’ – an expression ‘of the recurrent illusion of a cultivated nature predating any education’.²⁰ Moreover, the exam’s complicity with this myth makes practical criticism all the more effective as an entrance exam for membership in the cultural elite.

¹⁷ Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 246.

¹⁸ Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 251.

¹⁹ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 203.

²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Publics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 109.

Arnold had been painfully aware that the ideal of subjective universality runs into trouble when applied broadly for the purposes of aesthetic education, and thus gave much thought to the social problem of unequal access to culture across the classes. Indeed, his proto-study guide, *A Bible Reading*, was designed to be used as a provisional inroad to culture for the lower classes. Like Arnold, Richards was interested in poetry as a potential antidote to the malaise of modern living: the aesthetic experience brought on by a psychologically ‘healthy’ reading of poetry ensures that poetry ‘is capable of saving us; it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos’.²¹ Unlike Arnold’s more inclusive project of cultivation across social classes, however, the practical criticism examination – which became the primary approach to countering stock responses in students at Cambridge – was applied to a highly restricted social and cultural elite within the confines of an academic setting. In the book *Practical Criticism*, too, Richards’s recorded experiment confined itself to examining literary response within this confined social context. The narrowness of the social group that formed the basis for this experiment seems to reflect the idea which would come to characterise the *Scrutiny* movement: that Arnold’s egalitarian social mission was no longer possible, and that culture, itself under threat, needed protecting by an elite minority. For Richards, this heightened sense of urgency leads to an aggravation of Arnold’s pedagogical transmission problem. Here, the responsabilisation of the individual for her self-cultivation is much more pronounced than in Arnold, because the stakes are perceived to be significantly higher than they had been in his day. Richards seriously underplays the centrality of social opportunity: ‘Far more life is wasted through muddled mental organisation than through lack of opportunity. Conflicts between different impulses are the greatest evils which afflict mankind’.²² By emphasising the importance of mental agency over opportunity, Richards creates a sense that the in-group of culture is open to anyone who has the right psychological configuration, but downplays the difficulty of socialisation into that in-group.

The sense that anyone can obtain culture, and the underestimation of the potential difficulties of such an endeavour, is characteristic of an educational system which, Bourdieu argues, in ‘consecrating the cultural heritage it transmits, [...] deflects attention from and contributes to the misrecognition of its social reproduction function’.²³ Similarly, culture, inside or outside of this system, is ‘only achieved by denying itself as [...] artificial and

²¹ I.A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926), 83.

²² Richards, *Science and Poetry*, 33.

²³ David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 191.

artificially acquired'.²⁴ When the cultured minority perceive and present their own access to culture as natural and immediate, this is underpinned by the assumption of that culture's natural and immediate apprehension of 'experience' – of 'reality'. The idea that elite culture is closer than mass culture to the real – conceived of in ideologically covert terms – forms the basis upon which elite culture affirms itself as intrinsically superior to, not just different from, mass culture. This presumption, as we have seen, is legitimated by the idea of the stock response as a withdrawal from reality. In denying the artificiality of cultural acquisition and presenting culture as a natural inclination, Richards under-communicates the difficulty of socialisation into culture, thus both preserving the transmission problem over which Arnold had agonised, and – crucially – intensifying that problem by removing the pedagogical technologies which might help bridge the gap between the exclusivity of culture as an in-group and the possibilities for gaining membership of that culture.²⁵ As we shall see, the study guide's rationale is strengthened both by practical criticism's extraction of the literary work from its context, and by this heightened sense of responsibility for self-cultivation.

By withdrawing contextual information, and asking for what were perceived as free responses, unbound by customary critical biases which might disturb the reading experience, the practical criticism examination came to crystallise the sense that literary criticism depends upon some intellectual trade secret: the examination asks for the expression of a specific set of cultural values, or rather, for the demonstration of taste, whilst at the same time mystifying and obscuring the pedagogical and/or social methods of internalising these values for those students who do not already possess them. This amounts to a removal of the means to achieve cultural competence, or access the code in which culture is written.²⁶ Baldick has characterised the practical criticism examination as 'a total-response examination', which, designed to challenge 'the entire range and resources of a candidate's unaided sensibility',²⁷ turned out to be 'at its heart uncritical'.²⁸ In the face of such an examination, the study guide's recommendation, discussed in chapters one and two, that the student internalise its protocols in order to formulate her 'own thinking', would certainly seem reassuring. Examinations ask for the demonstration of free play within the determinate parameters of acceptable responses, and the study guide caters to the examination system by

²⁴ Bourdieu et al., *The Love of Art*, 110.

²⁵ Richards's underestimation of the challenges of unequal opportunities shares much with the neoliberal contention that individuals can overcome structural problems through successful risk-calculation.

²⁶ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 2.

²⁷ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 197.

²⁸ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 234.

training and preparing the student user to give the *correct* responses. Hence, the practical criticism examination, which seeks *correct* responses but leaves the student entirely to her own devices, intensifies the need for the provision of a set of protocols to internalise. This need is taken up by the study guide, which attempts to supply or approximate the contextual scaffolding the practical criticism approach has removed. Thus the practical criticism approach, despite its side-lining of contextual information, comes to intensify the rationale of the literature study guide genre as guidance for the student in unknown territory. Moreover, in testing the student's immediate responses to poetry, the practical criticism examination was in effect examining the extent of the student's successful socialisation into culture, a move that shifts attention from the poetry onto the individual student's capacity for in-group behaviour. The examination inherits this trait from Richards's experiment, in which the responses of the readers were the objects of psychological scrutiny. Because Richards locates culture within the individual mind, and associates stock responses with a deep crisis associated with the corruption of culture, he views the stock response as an indication not only of a lack of socialisation into taste, but of actual psychological damage: 'Bad taste and crude responses are not mere flaws in an otherwise admirable person. They are actually a root evil from which other defects follow'.²⁹ Culture as an 'inward condition', then, requires – as it had done for Arnold – a rigorous self-discipline.

The practical criticism examination, inheriting this ambivalence about the autonomy of texts and the individual agency of readers, represents an intimidating and daunting experience for the student because it exposes the success or failure of her socialisation into culture – and what is more, her psychological health seems to hinge on that socialisation, as culture is taken to be an indication of successful mental organisation. Indeed, as Knights puts it, 'the procedure was always in danger of turning into a pedagogy of shame, where students took the risk of exposing their preferences and their own inner worlds – even, inadvertently, their unconscious – to the stringent judgement of tutor and fellow students.'³⁰ The stakes are high, then, for the examinee, whose process of socialisation furthermore relies to a large extent on her own self-cultivation; she herself being responsible for traversing the structural obstacles and entering the cultured elite. In fetishising immediate aesthetic experience, the examination removes much of the educational apparatus which might allow the student to appropriate the particular habitus of the cultural field and gain access to the intellectual trade secret. The rationale for the indirect functioning of the study guide genre as a manual for taste is reinforced by this exacerbation of the Arnoldian pedagogical transmission problem.

²⁹ Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 47.

³⁰ Knights, 'English on Its Borders', 20.

Two readerships: ambivalence and polarity

The antagonism between practical criticism's preference for immediate experience over theoretical elaboration and the idea of the study guide as theoretical cheat sheet, removed from the immediacy of the reading experience, is helpful in accounting for the low status of the study guide within the discipline of English literature. Insofar as it functions as a *guide* to culture, the study guide necessarily speaks from the closed field of culture into which it seeks to help students gain entry. Hence, it is part of culture. Yet its pedagogical unconcern for the importance of immediate and autonomous aesthetic experience means that it risks promoting the kinds of habitual responses which practical criticism wants to avoid. However, if we agree with Baldick that practical criticism represents a 'total response' examination, habitual responses cannot be avoided entirely, but merely made less apparent. The study guide commits the sin of making explicit the need for self-cultivation into habituated responses, by exhibiting examples of such responses in pedagogical question and answer form. Moreover, this showcasing finds expression within a format which conflicts with the self-image of the cultural elite, as a mediation of highbrow culture in pop-cultural form.

Whilst working from within culture, the study guide format incorporates characteristics of the popular press. The blend within the study guide of both highbrow and lowbrow formal elements appears to contradict the idea in Richards and the Leavises of high culture and mass culture as antagonists. According to Q.D. Leavis, 'non-serious' media, such as periodicals, magazines, advertising, and newspapers have, ostensibly, corrupted and shaped the public's reading habits and expectations, perpetuating the very clichés that the bestseller novel conforms to. Thus, the popular publishing market has driven 'a wedge between the educated and the general public'.³¹ In her view, culture, far from having a broad social role, is now fragile and in retreat due to a general decline in the 'strong tradition of respect for the things that Arnold felt to be valuable'.³² This decline has given way to anarchy, and thus, despite Arnold's egalitarian cultural intentions, the 'sudden opening of the fiction market to the general public was a blow to serious reading'.³³

The more recent historical perception that the professionalisation of literary criticism in the universities represents a shift in the institutional locus of culture, which incorporates

³¹ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 159.

³² Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 189.

³³ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 161.

such a notion of a staunch opposition between high and lowbrow culture, doubtlessly owes much to Q.D. Leavis's concerns about the threat posed to culture proper by the advance of the mass cultural machine. Professionalisation is widely seen to have contributed to the polarisation of high culture and mass culture by separating academics and the wider reading public.³⁴ According to this view, literary criticism withdrew to the disinterested sphere of the ivory tower, away from the wider context of a flourishing popular press and mass book market. However, the professionalisation of the discipline also led to the expansion of student numbers, generating a larger demand for explicatory criticism and greater differentiation of genres in academic publishing. The study guide, then, does not rely just upon highbrow publishing for its theme and the mass book market for its pop-cultural form; it is also conditional upon the expansion of academic publishing. For whilst the study guide was never intended for use in the universities, university publishing nonetheless leads to a wider variety of pedagogical genres beyond the standard textbook; and the study guide's incorporation of different, and ostensibly incompatible, idioms indicates that there was room for cross-fertilisation across these separate publishing markets. As Stefan Collini has argued, the idea that academic publishing catered exclusively to academic readers is oversimplified: 'the story is not a simple one nor one that can easily be accommodated under the familiar account of "professionalisation"'.³⁵ Baldick, similarly, argues that the two audiences of these publishing markets were not entirely sealed off from one another, though the ground between them was one of conflict.³⁶ He cites 'the important modern genre of introductory essays to paperback "classic" novels' which is 'designed for both kinds of readership' as an example of a critical genre which – unlike the troubled study guide – transcends the uneasy space between highbrow and popular audiences in a relatively harmonious way.³⁷ The canonical paperback novel participates, like *A Bible Reading*, in the original Arnoldian ideal of aesthetic education, fraught though it may be; but the study guide, in its modern

³⁴ For historical accounts of the professionalisation of English criticism, see T.W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); Jo McMurty, *English Language, English Literature: The Creation of an Academic Discipline* (London: Mansell, 1985); Bernard Bergzoni, *Exploding English: Criticism, Theory, Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Chris Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory: 1890 to the Present* (London: Longman, 1996); Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*. For social histories of the expansion of literacy and the 'mass' audience, see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1998); and Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Stefan Collini, "'The Chatto List': Publishing Literary Criticism in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 63, No. 261 (2012): 663.

³⁶ Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory*, 6.

³⁷ Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory*, 6.

configuration, sits at a further remove from the disinterested sphere of culture due to its instrumental exam function.

For the social mission tradition the perception that the genres of high culture and mass culture belong to two distinct social spheres is crucial for its critique of mass culture in aesthetic terms. This means that the critics within that tradition perpetually risk supporting the quasi-religious idea that the sanctity and purity of the aesthetic is more important than the democratisation of culture, which might come to corrupt it. Indeed, Baldick observes a remarkable continuity within the social mission tradition, which equates ‘social and cultural orders with a certain balance or harmony of the individual mind’.³⁸ The mental *imbalance* which mass culture ostensibly brings about is the premise of a literary critique of mass culture which hinges on the notion that ‘one mind cannot take in more than one kind of cultural training’.³⁹ This ‘conception of unbroken and exclusive identity between the mind and its surrounding cultural influences’, writes Baldick, ‘is essential to these critics’ contention that “mass culture” is not only inferior but actually damaging’.⁴⁰ The social mission critics consistently describe the lack of cultivation which mass culture sustains in disapproving terms, running from ‘Arnold’s “ordinary self”, through Eliot’s “impure desires” and “heresies”, and Richards’s “perversions” and “Narcissism”, to the revulsion of the Leavises from adolescence, masturbation [...], and “immaturity”’.⁴¹ Little wonder, then, that the study guide genre – which utilises elements of mass cultural forms – should, as it comes to flourish within a pedagogical environment heavily influenced by practical criticism, gain a reputation for corrupting the purity of culture from the inside.

Function over form: the study guide as ‘taste machine’

According to the Leavises, the psychological effects of cultural objects and mass cultural objects are significantly different. Q.D. Leavis writes that a good novel can ‘deepen, extend, and refine experience by allowing the reader to live at the expense of an unusually intelligent and sensitive mind, by giving him access to a finer code than his own’. However, bestsellers work to the opposite end: they ‘actually get in the way of genuine feeling and responsible thinking by creating cheap mechanical responses and by throwing their weight on the side

³⁸ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 213.

³⁹ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 217.

⁴⁰ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 217-18.

⁴¹ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 217.

of social, national, and herd prejudices'.⁴² Like Arnold and Richards, these critics locate culture in the inward condition of individuals, and view the uncultured individual as responsible for her self-cultivation and the disciplining of her responses. However, the need to resolve what Pamela McCallum refers to as the 'Arnoldian paradox' of having to bring about the reinsertion of culture into the social world that culture is supposed to benefit, but from which it has become increasingly isolated,⁴³ leads to a distrust in the ability and willingness of the masses to withstand the damaging influences of mass culture in favour of the healthy influence of culture proper. This causes an ambivalence about the value of mass literacy – the very project to which the social mission tradition is itself devoted and out of which the study guide emerges. For, as Baldick writes, if 'certain kinds of knowledge are unhealthy or dehumanizing, while "experience" and cultural equilibrium [...] are preferred to them, then the ironical result can be that defenders of literature are tempted to challenge literature's basic prerequisite, literacy'.⁴⁴ For the Leavises the negative effects of illiteracy are potentially outweighed by those of reading ostensibly corrupting popular literature. Mass literacy being a fact, however, its latent ability to turn sour needs to be counteracted through the provision of critical resources that can provide a defence against the unhealthy influence of mass culture. Both Arnold and Richards had perceived the reading of the *right* kind of reading matter to be of the utmost social importance. For F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, somewhat differently, the acknowledgement of the supposedly negative side to literacy leads them to value the reading of morally uplifting literature as an urgent and necessary corrective to the damage caused by the *wrong* literature. The resultant full-blown educational project thus emphasises the 'possibilities of education specifically directed against such appeals as those made by the journalist, the middleman, the bestseller, the cinema, and advertising'.⁴⁵

The Leavises continue Arnold's social mission within the context of the school, but their proposed education *against* mass culture reflects the declining status of high culture, as well as the perception that this rivalry within culture intensifies significantly the need for that social mission. For the Leavises, two contexts increase the importance of training readers in becoming more actively discerning: the context of a strict modernist formalism which views clichéd popular literature as destructive to the authority of culture, and,

⁴² Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 74.

⁴³ Pamela McCallum, *Literature and Method: Towards a Critique of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), 3-7.

⁴⁴ Baldick, *Social Mission*, 206.

⁴⁵ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 271.

importantly, the effects of fascism, communism and propaganda following the First World War. Indeed, a movement of young Cambridge intellectuals, associated with *Scrutiny*, went into teaching and research in a passionate response to the manifesto: '[w]e are committed to more consciousness; that way, if any, lies salvation'.⁴⁶ This movement of school educators, as Margaret Mathieson has pointed out, played a central role in tightening 'the link between English studies at university level and the school teacher's responsibility in the outside world'.⁴⁷ *Culture and Environment*, written by F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson specifically for use in schools, perceives its contemporary society as sickly and abnormal – one in which the citizen should not be left to 'be formed unconsciously by his environment'.⁴⁸ To counteract the disintegration of the 'art of life',⁴⁹ what is called for is the reading of the *right* literature. The machinery which distributes the *wrong* kind of reading matter is, predictably, guilty of the destruction of taste and disinterested contemplation:

The advantage it brings us in mass-production has turned out to involve standardization and levelling-down outside the realm of mere material goods. Those who in school are offered (perhaps) the beginnings of an education in taste are exposed, out of school, to the competing exploitation of the cheapest emotional responses; films, newspapers, publicity in all its forms, commercially-catered fiction – all offer satisfaction at the lowest level, and inculcate the choosing of the most immediate pleasures, got with the least effort.⁵⁰

The first *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* edition was published in 1937, four years after the publication of *Culture and Environment*, and incorporated several of the corruptive elements outlined in the above quotation: whilst *Brodie's* publication was intended as an educational tool, its uncomfortable double allegiance between culture and commercialised mass culture places it firmly within the ambivalent space of the Leavises' hesitation concerning literacy. And as the study guide genre develops, its place within this uncomfortable space becomes more pronounced; whilst it guides the student in her reading of the *right*, canonical, literary texts, the study guide also relies upon a pop-cultural facility of expression. The mass produced and formulaic format of the study guide is designed to relieve effort – an intention which seems to participate in 'standardization' and 'levelling-down'. As such, the study guide can be conceived of as a mutant form; a 'taste machine', or, put less antagonistically, a manual for culture.

⁴⁶ F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, 5.

⁴⁷ Margaret Mathieson, *The Preachers of Culture: The Study of English and its Teachers* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 122.

⁴⁸ F.R. Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, 5.

⁴⁹ F.R. Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, 1.

⁵⁰ F.R. Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, 3.

The study guide, then, is problematic because it apparently facilitates habitual responses and eases the strain of serious reading. The low status of such an apparatus can be understood in terms of Q.D. Leavis's low estimation of 'indolent' readers, readers who would perhaps welcome the assistance offered by the study guide when faced with more highbrow, formally complex, literary texts. She notes that the general reading public has little time for complex texts which do not cater to its expectations. However, *popular novels* leave readers 'with the agreeable sensation of having improved themselves without incurring fatigue'.⁵¹ The effect of the serious and complex novel, on the other hand, is 'cumulative, and such a form demands from the reader a prolonged expenditure of effort'.⁵² Nevertheless, the quest for meaning she describes in the following citation is one that could provide a motivation for the development of the study guide:

The reader not prepared to readjust himself to the technique of *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse* will get very little return for the energy he must lay out in wrestling with those involved periods. He is repaid by none of the obvious satisfactions he expects from a novel – no friendly characters, no reassuring conviction that life is as he wants to believe it, no glow of companionship or stirring relation of action. All he gets is an impression of sensuous beauty as his eye helplessly picks out clumps of words without clearly following the sense; it is true this is all the average reader of poetry or Shakespeare gets (the latter throwing in 'character' and 'action' too), still he knows this is the function of poetry and demands no more. But he refuses to let a novel act on him as 'poetry,' hence his annoyance. He is dimly aware of having missed the point and feels cheated, or at best impressed but irritated.⁵³

When the primary text is out of joint with the reader's expectations, pedagogy is required in order to fill the gap. Insofar as it is part of the social mission of English criticism, the study guide seeks to participate in such a pedagogic function. According to Arnold's theory of aesthetic education, literary culture potentially brings about an empowering and democratising effect because it liberates the mind from habitual thinking by providing new and challenging ways of thinking and understanding.⁵⁴ In seeking to act as a vehicle of such empowerment, however, the study guide goes too far in its facilitation, thus fulfilling that pedagogic function at too high a price: it undercuts the requirement for a certain process of socialisation into culture by making (unfamiliar) high culture available to the masses in pop-cultural terms. By presenting the difficult literary text in an overly simplified way, the study guide detracts from the alterity of that text. Thus, the literary text is stripped of its otherness

⁵¹ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 37.

⁵² Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 214.

⁵³ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 61.

⁵⁴ 'It is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture' (Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 36).

and turned into something felt to be already known, whilst the value of the encounter with that text lies in its otherness.⁵⁵ So, in its exaggerated softening of the reader's encounter with alterity, the study guide removes the empowering effect of that encounter, thus negating its democratising function and instead facilitating stock responses. It seems doubtful, then, that the study guide can function successfully as a manual for taste in this way – that it can achieve genuine cultural empowerment. For in removing the difficulty of the encounter with the otherness of the high cultural literary text, the democratising function of the study guide works against the democratising function of culture insofar as cultural empowerment consists in the opportunity to have one's habitual responses challenged.

Wolfgang Iser has observed that the study guide has a place in the mediation between formally complex modernist texts and the perspective of a norm of interpretation which seeks a harmonious totality of meaning. He observes that 'modern literary works are [...] full of apparent inconsistencies – not because they are badly constructed, but because such breaks act as hindrances to comprehension, and so force us to reject our habitual orientations as inadequate',⁵⁶ and he goes on to explain the emergence of what he calls the 'reader's guide' – which I interpret as a broader conception of the study guide genre – as an attempt to hold on to certain habitual responses in the interpretation of modernist narrative:

If one tries to ignore such breaks, or condemn them as faults in accordance with classical norms, one is in fact attempting to rob them of their function. The frequency with which such attempts are made can be gauged merely from the number of interpretations bearing the title: *A Reader's Guide to...*⁵⁷

Iser's assumption that study guides deal with textual difficulties in these reductive ways would seem to be analogous with the way in which the study guide relies, as I have shown in chapter two, upon a simple and predictable plot-summary structure, rejecting elements that do not easily comply with its realist norm. Iser views the study guide as an hindrance to genuine literary response, being, as it were, in allegiance with the stock response. His view is that the study guide's rationale is strengthened by the conflict of values between readers who have an aesthetic disposition enabling them to appreciate complex modernist forms, and readers who find that complexity of form obscures their reading experience and their

⁵⁵ Derek Attridge describes the reader's response to alterity as a form of resistance to habitual responses: 'Otherness exists only in the registering of that which resists my usual modes of understanding, and that moment of registering alterity is a moment in which I simultaneously acknowledge my failure to comprehend and find my procedures of comprehension beginning to change' (*The Singularity of Literature* [London: Routledge, 2004], 27).

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 18.

⁵⁷ Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 18.

ability to follow the plot; nonetheless, this perspective seems to support the idea that the study guide has an intention to function as a manual for taste.

As we have seen, the study guide repudiates its disinterest by participating in the instrumental side of liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy, revealing that aesthetic experience in fact ‘presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code’.⁵⁸ The cultural code to a large extent depends on a stance liberated from necessity, allowing disinterested contemplation – or in Bourdieu’s words: the use of ‘stylized forms to deny function’.⁵⁹ In foregrounding its function, the study guide further implicates itself as a mass cultural genre premised upon ‘the subordination of form to function, or, one might say, on a refusal of the refusal which is the starting point of the high aesthetic, i.e., the clear-cut separation of ordinary dispositions from the specifically aesthetic disposition’.⁶⁰ According to Bourdieu’s sociology of taste, formally complex texts and artworks can often seem ‘disconcerting to working-class people’, because they tend to appreciate function rather than form, and ‘feel incapable of understanding what these things must signify, insofar as they are signs’.⁶¹ In the idea that pop-cultural texts encourage stock responses, the Leavises, too, are emphasising that ‘the herd’ read with the expectation that texts should fulfil an immediately discernible function. It seems unsurprising, then, that a market should develop for study guides attempting to train cultural competence by explaining complex fictional texts to unprepared readers in a highly functional format.

This is not, of course, to say that the development of the study guide genre is a product of what Richards and the Leavises viewed as mass culture’s tendency towards levelling-down. As I have argued throughout the preceding chapters, the study guide grows directly out of liberal humanist pedagogy. For an ideology which promotes disinterest and discourages self-interest, the instrumentality of its pedagogy is not easily recognised as its own. This humanist instrumentality is, to varying degrees at different times, appropriated by and subsumed under various forms of instrumental reason. The study guide’s partial allegiance to mass culture accounts for a similar, and intimately related, problem of liberal humanist disavowal of the genre. In seeking to make canonical literary texts more accessible, the study guide renders apparent the impossibility of the liberal humanist principle of subjective universality: by borrowing elements from the popular press and advertising, it

⁵⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 3.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

⁶⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 32.

⁶¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 43.

reveals the necessity for socialisation into the liberal humanist aesthetic conception of culture. Hence, it admits – implicitly, but controversially – what liberal humanist aesthetics does not recognize: that the social and cultural contexts of readers always will intrude upon their interpretations, and that aesthetic experience itself is contingent upon such contexts.

Brodie's Chosen English Texts in the 1930s

So far in this chapter, I have focused on the ways in which the idea of the study guide as a manual for taste reacts negatively with the Ricardian and Leavisite projects. The study guide's attempt to function specifically as a manual for taste, however, reflects its origination in the Arnoldian social mission which constitutes a primary influence on these latter projects. Consequently, several elements of the study guide's literary content can be viewed positively as participating in, or at the very least as harmonious with, the continuation of that mission. Because they emphasise the importance of the school as a forum for socialisation into culture, the educational ideas of the Leavises and the *Scrutiny* movement are of particular interest in this connection. The two earliest *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* publications from 1937 were published only a short space of time after the publications of the two early works by the Leavises which most strongly urged the need for an education against the environment through literary study, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) and *Culture and Environment* (1933). This period coincides with the early years of the publication of the journal *Scrutiny*, the editorial position of which contributed strongly to establishing F.R. Leavis's significant position within the discipline of English. Given the increasing influence of Leavisite ideas at this time, the years between 1932 and the time of the earliest *Brodie's* publications seems a suitable length of time for Leavisite principles to begin to take hold within educational thinking. Whilst I have been unable to find any direct connection between the movement and the editors of these two publications, the literary contents of these books share in several of the educational and literary values of the *Scrutiny* movement.

The two *Brodie's* publications are editions of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, both works recommended by the Leavises as school reading for the educational project against the environment. These two works are listed, along with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and the Authorised Version of the Bible, in *Fiction and the Reading Public* and *Culture and Environment* as associated with the *organic community*, a confabulation of the 'old order', which the Leavises believed to be untainted by the machinery of post-industrial mass culture and therefore in touch with a genuine experience

of life.⁶² So, whilst literacy enables contact with the corruptive written material of the fallen modern world, the reading of the literature of the organic community, and especially *Pilgrim's Progress*, lends itself 'to the elucidating of what a national culture is, and what has been lost'.⁶³ Q.D. Leavis, true to Arnold's conception of disinterested aesthetic education, describes Bunyan's interest for the reader as 'intrinsic' rather than historical.⁶⁴ The way in which the intrinsic value of his work was correctly appreciated prior to the Victorian era is described through an account of the reading habits of the 'self-made man' in the period between 1750 and 1850: this reader was able to identify humanising literature without distraction, and would typically pick out the four works recommended by the Leavises, enjoying these works in a disinterested fashion, with no intentions of 'raising himself for his efforts'.⁶⁵ Such readers had 'no consciousness in all this of education for a material end; they read first to inform themselves on the matter of religion and finally for pure enjoyment'.⁶⁶ Bunyan, who Q.D. Leavis describes as 'on the side of the highbrow',⁶⁷ becomes the image of the organic community, which 'is fundamentally antithetical to that of the twentieth century'.⁶⁸ This view of Bunyan's disinterested and anti-instrumental value is echoed in the *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*: '[Bunyan] would have abhorred the suggestion that he was to play an important part, nay, any part at all, in the development of the English novel', because he did not write with 'the intention of establishing a copyright and reaping large royalties'.⁶⁹ However, the *Brodie's* edition of *Pilgrim's Progress* also reflects the pragmatic intentions behind *A Bible Reading*. Hence, this 1930s study guide shares in the Arnoldian tension between the idea that aesthetic experience is necessary and immediate and the knowledge that, despite this, facilitation is needed to bring this experience about. Arnold's pragmatic rationale for use of the Bible rather than classics in school reading has been one of linguistic availability. The early *Brodie's* publications express the same concern: 'The beauty and power of Bunyan's

⁶² Baldick, *Social Mission*, 193.

⁶³ F.R. Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, 6.

⁶⁴ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 99.

⁶⁵ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 106-107.

⁶⁶ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 108.

⁶⁷ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 100.

⁶⁸ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 99.

⁶⁹ Norman T. Carrington, ed., *John Bunyan: Pilgrims Progress, Pt. I*, *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1937), 5.

language and imagery can be appreciated by the reader whose learning goes no further than his mother tongue'.⁷⁰ In the clash between such pragmatic concerns and the disinterested ideal evident from its treatment of Bunyan, the 1937 *Brodie's* edition of *Pilgrim's Progress* maintains the Arnoldian transmission problem.

Between them, however, the two earliest *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* – published in the same year – come, curiously, to illustrate this problem yet more clearly. Taken together, they exemplify that the study guide's complicity with the liberal humanist aesthetic ideal of disinterest involves both sympathy and antipathy: for whilst the guide on Bunyan participates in the disinterested ideal and appears to be modelled on Arnold's *Bible Reading*, the guide on Milton is more targeted in its pedagogy, offering copious amounts of information on the work and its author, several lists of difficult and obsolete words and their derivations, as well as a list of examination questions. The formal inconsistency between these two first study guides in their first year, is expressive of a heightened sense of anxiety around the codification of literary criticism in the decades preceding their publication in the second half of the 1930s. That anxiety, aggravated by the advance of practical criticism, complicates the complicity between the social mission movement and the developing study guide genre in a very curious way, making more acute the interest/disinterest problem, but all the while creating a fertile environment in which the study guide genre can grow.

The study guide and 'cultural goodwill'

A key source of antipathy between the study guide genre and the practical criticism approach is the latter's attitude of reluctance towards facilitating literary appreciation through direct means. A similar situation is described in Bourdieu's *Distinction*, where, even in the classroom, the appropriation of legitimate culture through cultural capital and social background is favoured over the instrumental appropriation of culture via pedagogy, 'since even within the educational system it devalues scholarly knowledge and interpretation as 'scholastic' or even 'pedantic' in favour of direct experience and simple delight'.⁷¹ Through the ideological status of high culture, aesthetic objects are given the power to impose the norms of their own perception, tacitly defining 'as the only legitimate mode of perception the one which brings into play a certain disposition and a certain competence', meaning that 'all agents, whether they like it or not, whether or not they have the means of conforming to

⁷⁰ Carrington, *Pilgrims Progress*, 19.

⁷¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 2.

them, find themselves objectively measured by those norms'.⁷² As an agent responding to the norms of canonical literary works, the study guide cannot escape the ideal of disinterest which serves to weaken its function as tool for the social mission of bringing aesthetic experience to everyone. But, as I have been arguing, the study guide does not wholeheartedly conform to the disinterested ideal – it is highly provocative, albeit implicitly, precisely because it renders apparent the inconsistencies in disinterest's dealings with instrumentality, as well as the need for pragmatics in its practical application. It is therefore an expression of the main point of Bourdieu's sociology of taste, namely that disinterested cultural dispositions are also 'products of learning' bringing 'to light the hidden conditions of the miracle of the unequal class distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture in general'.⁷³ Whilst those who have been socialised into the required cultural code too have *learnt* that code through more or less observably practical channels, the mastery of it, according to Bourdieu, is acquired 'through an implicit learning analogous to that which makes it possible to recognize familiar faces without explicit rules or criteria – and it generally remains at a practical level', the criteria of which 'usually remain implicit'.⁷⁴ The study guide renders explicit, not necessarily these same criteria, which are available chiefly through cultural capital and social background, but the *implicitness* of these criteria and the *practical level* at which they are learnt.

The study guide, as we have seen, has two functions as a technology of the self: (1) a pragmatic function, often associated with instrumental reason, of seeking to help individual students improve examination results, and (2) a 'humanist' function, attempting to facilitate the acquisition of cultural capital; or, in other words, it functions as a manual for taste for those students who do not possess a sense of entitlement to culture. The motivation for the use of such a manual can be understood in terms of Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural goodwill', which in his analysis is defined as a property of the *petite bourgeoisie*. Cultural goodwill 'manifests itself as a "cultural docility", a sense of "unworthiness", a "reverence" for Culture'.⁷⁵ Participation in culture is viewed as attractive because cultural consecration confers 'on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation'.⁷⁶ But because the 'petit bourgeois do not know how to play the

⁷² Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 28.

⁷³ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 29.

⁷⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 4.

⁷⁵ Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992), 93.

⁷⁶ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

game of culture as a game', they 'take culture too seriously to go in for bluff or imposture or even for the distance and casualness which show true familiarity'; indeed, they take it 'too seriously to escape permanent fear of ignorance or blunders, or to side-step tests by responding with the indifference of those who are not competing or the serene detachment of those who feel entitled to confess or even flaunt their lacunae'.⁷⁷ This social fear of blunders, which clearly provides a basis for the study guide's manual function, is described in similar terms by Adorno and Horkheimer: '[T]he dutiful child of modern civilization is possessed by a fear of departing from the facts which, in the very act of perception, the dominant conventions of science, commerce, and politics – cliché-like – have already molded; his anxiety is none other than the fear of social deviation'.⁷⁸

Whilst, as Bourdieu suggests, participation in culture is seen to work towards elevating the status of the middle-brow, high culture, in turn, is de-sanctified through contact with middle-brow culture.⁷⁹ The way that the study guide's status, in the eyes of the cultured minority, becomes conditioned by its participation in pop-cultural forms illustrates this relationship. Nevertheless, in the case of explicatory educational texts, Bourdieu suggests, participation in pop-cultural forms does not affect their status: 'legitimate, i.e. scholastic, popularization [...] overtly proclaims its pedagogic objectives and can therefore unashamedly reveal the means it uses to lower the transmission level'.⁸⁰ If this were true of the study guide, however, it ought not to cause – or accentuate – any disciplinary anxiety. But because the study guide is not straightforwardly a part of the educational system, and only parasitic upon its examination boards, it finds its place somewhere between the school system and the sphere of the autodidact; hence, it does not rightly belong inside Bourdieu's conception of 'legitimate' popularisation. Moreover, the study guide's popularisation of culture is especially problematic insofar as that popularisation takes *literary* culture, specifically, as its object, and, moreover, that its function operates within the specific space of English literature's disciplinary anxiety. The discipline, as I have been arguing, is particularly fraught with tension concerning the interest/disinterest problem and thus finds it hard to tolerate the study guide's implicit confrontation of that problem.

⁷⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 330.

⁷⁸ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, trans. John Cumming, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1997), xiv.

⁷⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 327.

⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 323.

The study guide and the problem for English

The social mission critics envisaged English literature not as a narrowly academic discipline, but as a broad social remedy. For this reason, the disciplinary anxiety – the worry about the effects of codification upon literary reading, is perhaps especially acute in the work of these critics. So, whilst Richards and F.R. Leavis in particular are widely held to have been amongst the primary critics driving discipline formation in the universities, ‘the consolidation of English as a specialist academic discipline’, writes Atherton, ‘was never their main intention. Instead it was criticism’s wider social role that was felt to be more important’.⁸¹ Thus, the ‘relationship between these critics and discipline formation is more problematic than is usually assumed’.⁸² Like the study guide which responds to it, the practical criticism approach itself is expressive of an anxiety about disciplinary codification. As Atherton points out, Richards ‘did not want his critiques to be applied in a programmatic manner, and felt that criticism required a “subtle sense” of meaning and intention rather than the crude application of a fixed method’.⁸³ Similarly apprehensive about method and institutionalisation, the *Scrutiny* movement viewed the examination system as, in the words of Francis Mulhern, ‘marked by strong tendencies towards standardization and abstraction whose origins lay in the economic and political system, and whose effects were culturally destructive’.⁸⁴ So far, this chapter’s discussion has focused, like these critics, on the study guide and cultural capital within the education system as a specifically *social* problem. But, in order to expand on the study guide’s relationship with culture not just as a social good, but also more specifically as an intrinsic part of the discipline’s pedagogy, attention will presently be paid to Graff’s account of academic trade secrets and cluelessness.⁸⁵ Hence, the focus of the discussion now moves from the particular context of socialisation into high culture and decontextualized close reading to the broader context of socialisation into *academic* culture.

The interest/disinterest problem is still a central problem for the discipline today, and underlies many of its internal conflicts. As indicated towards the close of the previous

⁸¹ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 150.

⁸² Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 126.

⁸³ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 142.

⁸⁴ Mulhern, *The Moment of ‘Scrutiny’*, 103.

⁸⁵ Whilst Graff’s remarks pertain to the situation in the US specifically, I believe that there are clear parallels with the British situation – unsurprisingly given that literary study in these two national contexts has developed through close trans-Atlantic dialogue and exchange.

chapter, Graff holds that the tension between interest and disinterest has been sustained in the universities by ‘a system which, by isolating functions, separates methodology from the contexts and theories which would keep its justifications visible’.⁸⁶ Indeed, this organisation of the university English department on a ‘principle of systematic non-relationship’ allowed the maintenance of ‘the myth of shared humanistic values’.⁸⁷ Usually, the blame for humanism’s internal problems ‘falls on the inherent tendency of methodology itself to become a monster grinding out research and criticism without their producers knowing why they are producing it’.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, any instrumental tendency in humanist literary pedagogy is seen as extrinsic to – and as an imposition upon – literature, the latter being ‘self-interpreting as long as it remained an expression of humanism’.⁸⁹ This denial of the instrumentality of literary pedagogy involves the idea that ‘salvation can be achieved if only the great literary works can be freed from the institutional and professional encumbrances which come between students or laymen and the potency of the work itself’.⁹⁰ This ideal of disinterested reading is tacitly internalised even in generalised notions about literature outside of the university. Even today, the mainstream conception of literary culture involves what Graff describes as the ‘belief that to analyze a literary work or otherwise “intellectualize” about it is to spoil the pleasure of reading’.⁹¹ This belief – that critical engagement with literature disturbs its claim to a disinterested reading – is held by students and lay people alike, and is maintained by the university English department as one of many beliefs which fall ‘into the cracks between courses and fails to be addressed’.⁹²

The continued strong influence of practical criticism’s method of decontextualized close reading on A-level English in recent years, moreover, is discernible in the debates surrounding the Curriculum 2000 A-level reform which stated that students would have to demonstrate contextual knowledge of the history and reception of set texts.⁹³ Atherton views these debates as reflecting the deep-seated nature of the discipline’s anxieties about codification. Such worries are noticeable in a ‘number of objections to [...] the idea that the

⁸⁶ Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 9.

⁸⁷ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 8-9.

⁸⁸ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 9.

⁸⁹ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 9.

⁹⁰ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 10.

⁹¹ Graff, *Professing Literature*, xix.

⁹² Graff, *Professing Literature*, xix.

⁹³ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 158.

study of literature should involve anything other than a personal encounter with the text'.⁹⁴ The reluctance to address contextual issues such as the interest/disinterest problem, on the grounds that such discussions detract from the immediacy of the student's literary experience, leads, as this chapter has illustrated, to the sense that literary culture is split between those who 'get it' and those who don't. As Graff puts it: 'without a context, the student's "direct" experience of literature itself tends to result either in uncertainty or facile acquiescence in an interpretive routine'.⁹⁵ As Bourdieu asserts, such a context – the cultural code – is acquired through implicit learning by those who feel entitled to it. I have suggested that those who don't possess the cultural capital necessary for such implicit learning might find useful the aid of a manual such as the study guide. The study guide, however, functions in relation to the dominant pedagogies of the literary field which, despite a number of other critical concerns, maintain sympathies with decontextualized close reading. Thus, if Graff is correct, these pedagogies preserve, at least in part, the insecurity encouraged by practical criticism, and inspire reliance upon systematic, and uninspired, interpretive routines. In its mission to abolish uncertainty, the study guide does indeed promote the use of formulaic and targeted interpretative strategies. Graff, too, sees the study guide genre as an expression of student desperation at being cut off from the cultural code. He asks what the point of assigning texts would be 'if many students need the Cliffs Notes to gain an articulate grasp'.⁹⁶ Indeed, Graff seems to view the study guide, and the American series *Cliffs Notes* in particular, as a last resort for despairing students: 'students repress their anxiety and alienation and some end up resorting to Cliffs Notes – or increasingly nowadays to the Internet'.⁹⁷ This happens when students, under the pressure of something akin to the fear of social blunders which underlies Bourdieu's cultural goodwill, make the assumption that correct interpretations of texts are available and waiting to be found, that: 'rivers and gardens in themselves have some fixed but secret meaning that you either get or don't get; if you're one of those who doesn't, you can only get on the Web and try to find one of those who do'.⁹⁸ Regardless of Graff's apparent low regard for study guides, his account of academic cluelessness does illustrate students' rationale in using them: students feel helpless when

⁹⁴ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, 170.

⁹⁵ Graff, *Professing Literature*, 11.

⁹⁶ Gerald Graff, *Clueless in Academe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 8.

⁹⁷ Graff, *Clueless*, 51.

⁹⁸ Graff, *Clueless*, 52.

faced with academia's 'unspoken policy of "don't ask, don't tell" that prevents clarification from breaking out'.⁹⁹

When the study guide responds to students' need for academic 'certainty' in this way, another dimension of the generalised low opinion of study guides amongst professionals in the discipline becomes apparent; for not only does the study guide detract from the immediacy of aesthetic experience, it appears reductive also in academic terms. Graff writes that, for many academics, 'to *simplify* academic enquiry is to vulgarize it'.¹⁰⁰ He points to the embarrassment academics feel at schematising their material, aware though they are that complexity requires simple explanation.¹⁰¹ But, pragmatically, Graff sees his role as a teacher as 'demystifying the "club we belong to" and breaking up its exclusivity'.¹⁰² And, as a consequence of his emphasis on the importance of initiation into what he calls 'argument culture', Graff encourages the use of pedagogic formulae: '[i]f we refuse to provide such formulas on the grounds that they are too prescriptive or that everything has to come from the students themselves, we just end up hiding the tools for success'.¹⁰³ Moreover, in stark opposition to the positions of Richards and the Leavises, he finds that it 'is better to have a stock of clichés – which can be built and improved on – than nothing to say at all'.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps, then, there should be room, after all, within Graff's account, for a partial redemption of the study guide's reputation, if only because it expresses a need for resolution of a cluster of problems which lies at the heart of the discipline of English – on account both of its participation in particular exclusive cultural standards and in related, occasionally obfuscating, academic ideals.

If the study guide, as it appears around the year 2000, can be partly redeemed by assigning to it the same status as the little boy who reveals the under-communicated problem with the emperor's new clothes, but can be allowed no further approbation, we can safely say that the study guide genre has failed miserably as a tool for the aesthetic education envisaged by Arnold. A further reason for this failure, which was addressed in chapter one and which will be returned to in chapter five, is its kinship of spirit with the profit-seeking element of instrumental reason. John Guillory holds that in recent decades the status of

⁹⁹ Graff, *Clueless*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Graff, *Clueless*, 10.

¹⁰¹ Graff, *Clueless*, 138.

¹⁰² Graff, *Clueless*, 24-25.

¹⁰³ Graff, *Clueless*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Graff, *Clueless*, 176.

cultural capital itself has changed through the expansion of the professional-managerial class and its instrumentalised values. As Guillory notes, the ‘professional-managerial class has made the correct assessment that, so far as its future profit is concerned, the reading of great works is not worth the investment of very much time or money’.¹⁰⁵ The study guide’s ‘manual’ function, then, is not just an expression of cultural goodwill, but also – as I argued in chapter one – an expression of the neoliberal ethos, or the pragmatic tactics of the professional-managerial class. As we have seen, the increased presence of such ideologies in education policy has allowed the discipline of English literature to externalise the inherent instrumentality of its own pedagogy, explaining away its disciplinary anxiety as resulting from an external threat.

Conclusion

In spite of their ambivalence concerning codification, the critical projects of Richards, F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis at Cambridge in the 1920s and 1930s were to have a lasting effect on the discipline of English literature’s teaching methods which accord a foundational role to the principles of practical criticism and close reading. Practical criticism’s heavy emphasis on disinterested reading and autonomous texts, as conceived by Richards and the Leavises, represents a rarefication of that Arnoldian perception of culture which provided the initial rationale for the development of the study guide genre. Because these critics perceived the integrity of culture to be threatened by mass culture, which they viewed as an extreme form of machinery, the need for Arnold’s social mission seemed all the more desperate. However, in the light of this Leavisite disdain for popular forms, the study guide – which would come to increasingly take on pop-cultural characteristics – would come to seem too compromised to function as a legitimate tool for aesthetic education. In having its aesthetic rationale compromised, the study guide has become primarily a *functional* and *interested* form, a partial participant in mass culture, and, it would seem, a questionable tool for supporting the integrity of high culture.

Hence, the study guide is fraught with binary tensions: it operates in the space between high and low culture; between immediate aesthetic experience and habitual stock responses; between liberal humanist ideals of culture and its codification; between those who possess cultural capital – who are in on the intellectual trade secret – and those who don’t. The study guide can be seen, therefore, both as seeking to operate as a sort of manual for

¹⁰⁵ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 46.

taste, insofar as taste can be appropriated through such means, *and* to reveal the distaste within the discipline of English for pragmatic codification of the lingering romantic notion of immediate aesthetic experience as necessarily and subjectively universal.

As we have seen in this chapter, the study guide reveals what liberal humanist criticism has tried to suppress: that there is no such thing as unmediated – and immediate – aesthetic experience. I would like to close the chapter by reflecting briefly on a perspective in which the study guide’s several fraught tensions can be perceived as rather less intimidating to the integrity of culture. Guillory points out that Bourdieu is right ‘that it is impossible to experience any cultural product apart from its status as cultural capital (high or low); and even more, that it is impossible to experience cultural capital as disarticulated from the system of class formation or commodity production’.¹⁰⁶ The significance of this is that there ‘is no realm of pure aesthetic experience, or object which elicits nothing but that experience’.¹⁰⁷ Crucially, however, Guillory argues that the ‘*specificity* of aesthetic experience is not contingent upon its “purity”’, and that this ‘mixed’ condition is indeed ‘the condition of every social practice and experience’.¹⁰⁸ The misconception that an impure aesthetics must lead to a denial of its *reality*, he argues, stems from the ‘historical determinations which have produced aesthetic discourse as a *discourse of purity*’.¹⁰⁹ The impossibility of autonomous and disinterested aesthetic appreciation, then, cannot be sufficient grounds to dismiss aesthetic experience altogether. As Guillory puts it, ‘the experience of *any* cultural work is an experience of an always composite pleasure’.¹¹⁰ If a disinterested aesthetic sphere, detached from utility, is impossible – and to this the study guide genre serves to testify –; if aesthetic experience is always contingent upon social practice and experience, then the study guide cannot compromise cultural integrity. What it can do, and what it does better than its declared function of improving examination results, is provide a reason for confronting some old disciplinary skeletons lurking in the closets of literary studies.

¹⁰⁶ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

¹⁰⁷ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

¹⁰⁸ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

¹⁰⁹ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

¹¹⁰ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

Part III

Interested Disinterest

Chapter 5

Tension, Polarity and ‘Impurity’: The Development of the Literature Study Guide, 1951-2000

This chapter consists of a case study analysing the study guide genre’s development towards increased levels of instrumental rationality during the course of its history from 1951-2000. The year 1951 marks the inauguration of the A-level examination system, when the study guide was still considerably governed by the ideal of disinterest and still fulfilled its role as a manual for taste; by the year 2000, the study guide had settled into its instrumental role in improving ‘human capital’. This analysis of the study guide’s history will be carried out by way of a comparison of the early period of 1951-1965 and the later period of 1990-2000. This comparative analysis of the two different time periods will allow us to understand the genre in terms of the balance between its inherent opposing elements at these different times, and to give a description of the tension within the study guide at each end of the spectrum, thus providing a maximally general account of the constellation of these opposing elements within the study guide genre.

In order to effectively showcase the balance between the study guide’s humanist and instrumental impulses, the case study concentrates its attention on study guides on literary texts and authors closely associated with a liberal humanist aesthetic, often described as ‘timeless’ classics, broadly received and typically taught as dealing in great universal truths. In line with this perspective, the chosen study guides also represent texts which have been popular with A-level examination boards over an extended period of time. The texts are William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, and selected poetry and letters of John Keats.

The analysis will be conducted by first showcasing the potential for polarity within the study guide genre. To this end, it will investigate the extremely fraught internal tension between interest and disinterest, centred on an ambivalence towards the study guide’s plot-driven format, in early guides in the series *Notes on Chosen English Texts* – in particular the 1958 guide on Keats, where an ideal of *pure* disinterest is given an especially strong expression. This series will be contrasted with the exceptionally ‘neoliberalised’ series *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* from around the year 2000, where disinterest is virtually extinct. The discussion will then be nuanced by way of an investigation of further guide series, *Brodie’s Notes* and *York Notes Advanced*, focusing especially on the impact of

‘Theory’ on the balance of interest and disinterest in late 1990s study guides, and on the coinciding amplification of the study guide’s declared attention to assessment criteria.

The chapter will argue that the increased instrumentalism of the study guide, manifested especially in the wake of the educational policies of the Thatcher years, intensifies the need for a defence of some notion of disinterest. The study guide offers an occasion to think through certain ambiguities within the concept of disinterest because it helps show that those ambiguities are inherent in the realisation of the ideal. My discussion of the study guide so far in this thesis has questioned the idea of disinterest. The fraught dialectic within the study guide is an example of how an unsustainably binary conception of the conflict between interest and disinterest renders the notion of disinterest implausible. However, towards the end of this chapter I will contend that the concept of disinterest need not be discredited if it can be disassociated from the demand for purity within liberal humanist aesthetic discourse, granting its necessary complicity with certain less problematic forms of interestedness, in particular those pertaining to pedagogy.

Teach Yourself Literature Guides: instrumental rationality and neoliberalism

More than any other literature study guide series, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* (Hodder & Stoughton 1998-2000),¹ expresses the instrumentality of the ideological climate in which the study guide genre has flourished. Accordingly, this series was presented in chapter one as a particularly overt example of the manifestation of the neoliberal ethos in study guides. I showed how, in participating in this neoliberal work ethic, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* seek to responsabilise the individual student in relation to her own life development, encouraging the student to treat the latter as a form of calculated entrepreneurial activity. This responsabilisation is evident in the section heading ‘How to get an “A” in English literature’,² as well as in the section ‘Revision for A-level literature success’, where the guides urge: ‘You are now in the most important educational stage of your life, and are soon to take English Literature exams that may have a major impact on your future career and goals’.³ These guides assume that the student’s motivation is not related to literary value,

¹ All of the publications in the series include an identical section on study techniques. This facilitates an examination of the methods and purposes of the series as a whole. Incidentally, the same series ran in the USA under the title *Literature Made Easy*.

² Shaun McCarthy and Tony Buzan, *Hamlet: William Shakespeare*, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides Advanced* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000), 102-12.

³ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, v.

but centres on the achievement of ‘success both at school and in your A-level English literature exams, as well as your professional or university career’.⁴ The use of this rhetoric, which emphasises the importance of the student’s ‘human capital’ over the value of literary cultivation, demonstrates that by the end of the 1990s the study guide has travelled a considerable distance away from its place of origin in the ‘disinterested’ project of aesthetic education. In this series, the prevalence of instrumentality is, in fact, most noticeable in the virtual absence of any evidence of liberal humanist loyalties. The *Teach Yourself Literature* guide on *Hamlet*, for example, provides but a trace of the humanist impulse by way of a few stock-humanist notions. For example, it ‘is Shakespeare’s genius in dealing with “big” themes in his plots that make [sic] his plays timeless’.⁵ The weakness or absence of the humanist impulse suggests the hegemonic status of instrumental rationality within these study guides; but whilst this series might be seen as something of a caricature of the genre, it is precisely as such that it is really useful. This is because the *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* allow us to see that within the *Zeitgeist* of the period 1990-2000 it is possible to create, market and distribute a study guide on English literature that is completely out of touch with the values of the discipline from which the genre initially emerged.

In place of the humanist impulse, *Teach Yourself Literature* promotes an amplification of the instrumental impulse through its extraordinarily targeted and generalised approach:

At this crucial stage of your life the thing you need even more than subject knowledge is the knowledge of *how* to remember, *how* to read faster, *how* to comprehend, *how* to study, *how* to take notes and *how* to organize your thoughts. You need to know *how* to think; you need a basic introduction on how to use that super bio-computer inside your head – your brain.⁶

In its preference for generally applicable instrumental techniques over specific literary understanding, the series renders the specificity of its subject entirely arbitrary. This general approach is indicative of *Teach Yourself Literature*’s participation in what Ben Knights has described as ‘a refashioning of the student identity’, which takes place not ‘at the level of discipline, but through a generic, trans-disciplinary agenda, whose visible signs include transferable skills, entrepreneurship, personal development profiles, and employability’.⁷ This attitude is prevalent in *Teach Yourself Literature*’s employment of non-subject-specific

⁴ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, v.

⁵ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xiv.

⁶ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, v.

⁷ Ben Knights, ‘Intelligence and Interrogation: The Identity of the English Student’, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 4, no. 33 (2005): 48.

and quasi-scientific memorisation techniques developed by Tony Buzan, the self-proclaimed ‘inventor of Mind Mapping and expert on the brain, memory, speed reading, creativity and innovation’.⁸ According to Knights, refashioning the student identity in accordance with instrumental rationality actively undermines the specificity of academic disciplines and downgrades specialist knowledge.⁹ In the case of English literary studies, this undermining of disciplinary specificity is serious because it affects how students read and engage with literature itself. Moreover, framing the student as consumer brings about an unrealistic expectation of what the discipline is and what it can offer. As Derek Attridge points out, there is a student expectation ‘that success will consist in meeting specified “Assessment Objectives” in their essays and examinations, resulting in painful disappointment when it turns out that the highest marks go to adventurous and risk-taking work for which no prior formula is available’.¹⁰ *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* participate strongly in framing the student as consumer of intellectual commodities.¹¹ In that vein, the ‘new success formula: Mind Maps®’¹² offers the student-consumer the tools to ‘surf-ride your memory wave all the way to your exam, success and beyond!’¹³

The way the series undermines the specificity of the discipline is visible in its heavy emphasis on memorisation techniques. These seem peculiarly misplaced in the context of a discipline which has tended to accentuate the importance of textual *response* both in pedagogic practice and assessment, and within a genre which initially grew out of that concern. The idea that something valuable takes place in the encounter between the text and the reader underlies the Arnoldian project of aesthetic education, the Ricardian project of preventing stock responses, and the Leavisite mission of countering the damaging effects of popular culture. It permeates the whole tradition of close reading, and also constitutes the starting point for theoretical developments such as reader-response. It further permeates the entire variegated body of literary and critical theory that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, where critical individual response, for different reasons, is of central importance due to the continual questioning of the autonomy and authority of texts and authors as well

⁸ ‘About’, Tony Buzan, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/>.

⁹ Knights, ‘Intelligence and Interrogation’, 48.

¹⁰ Derek Attridge, ‘The Department of English and the Experience of Literature’, in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline, Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Niall Gildea, Helena Goodwyn, Megan Kitching and Helen Tyson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 46.

¹¹ Knights, ‘Intelligence and Interrogation’, 48.

¹² McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, viii.

¹³ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, vii.

as their cultural and political contexts. In short, within literary studies, treating the literary text as information which can be regurgitated by way of memorisation is a decidedly reductive approach to literary response. In section headlines such as the following, *Teach Yourself Literature* betrays its disconnection from the humanist concern with literary cultivation, which before this series had always characterised study guides: ‘How to understand, improve and master your memory of *Literature Guides*’ [emphasis mine].¹⁴ Here, the series unwittingly betrays its lack of concern for the student’s individual responses to literary texts by explicitly suggesting what other study guide series have always taken pains to deny: that the memorisation of *the study guide itself* – as a ‘cheat sheet’ – is a useful shortcut to examination success. As discussed in chapter two, study guide series tend to disclaim their intention to function as a shortcut to exam success by using the liberal humanist caveat that the guide should not constrict the student’s freedom of interpretation, leaving implicit that this freedom is bound, of course, by the parameters of assessment. So, where other study guides at least seemingly encourage an independent reading of the original text, *Teach Yourself Literature* ‘assumes that you have already read *Hamlet*’, but reassures that, whilst ‘you will get more out of these if you do’, the student ‘could read the “Characterization” and “Themes” sections without referring to [the original text]’.¹⁵ When *Teach Yourself Literature* candidly admits to its promotion of pre-formed responses and actively presents its memorisation technique as a shortcut, this represents an alienation from the discipline and its values. It also represents an extension of the boundaries of what is legitimate within the literature study guide genre, motivated not by the specific demands of the discipline of English literature, but by a trans-disciplinary neoliberal agenda and the commercial exploitation of such.

Buzan’s quasi-scientific approach presupposes objectively quantifiable criteria of success in literary studies. In doing so, it misinterprets the discipline’s possibilities by overlooking the specific importance of its fundamental disciplinary anxiety – an anxiety which significantly impacts on the identity of literary studies and its teaching practices, and which – importantly – defies instrumentalism in assessment. Attridge explains the resistance to quantification within English literary studies thus: the discipline does not consist of ‘constative accumulations of knowledge but performative events, welcoming otherness into the world.’¹⁶ Hence, the ‘best teaching of literature is that which encourages students to read with an openness to the unfamiliar, and to write in ways that do justice to the otherness they

¹⁴ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, v.

¹⁵ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xiii.

¹⁶ Attridge, ‘The Department of English’, 43.

have encountered'.¹⁷ Along with the value of the student's individual response to literary texts, the discipline's deep-rooted resistance to codification goes unheeded in Buzan's pragmatic view of the student as 'brain/bio-computer' and the literary as 'information'. *Teach Yourself Literature* presents a student strangely detached from her brain-instrument: 'I wish you and your brain every success!';¹⁸ 'Ask your friends what they know about the subject. This helps them review the knowledge in their own brains, and helps your brain get new knowledge about what you are studying'.¹⁹ Here, the student is an active subject and the brain a useful object – a resource for examination purposes. The same instrumentalism is discernible in the rhetorical treatment of literary texts qua *information* ripe for processing in the 'bio computer' brain: mind maps, we are told, 'automatically strengthen your memory muscle every time you use them', and are 'especially useful in English literature, as they allow you to map out the whole territory of a novel, play or poem, giving you an "at-a-glance" snapshot of all the key information you need to know'.²⁰ Moreover, *Teach Yourself Literature* advises the student, in her speed-reading of literary texts, that most 'information is contained in the beginnings and ends'.²¹ In this heavily instrumental and pseudo-scientific study guide series even daydreaming is part of the calculated technique, as a 'necessary brain-power booster – geniuses do it regularly'!²² Remarkable, also, is the guide's proposed use of what is referred to as 'the **imagination** memory principle'.²³ Here, the alienation of the student from her own brain extends also to her capacities for daydreaming and imagination. The imagination – the free play of which is central in humanist discourse – is now repackaged as part of a supposedly rational and scientific study technique, the ultimate purpose of which is improved examination results. The 'principle' is introduced with the advice that students should relate to characters by pretending to be a 'video producer filming that person's life'.²⁴ The ethos of this guide publication is so instrumental that it assumes the student's estrangement from her inner imaginative and empathetic faculties, as well as from her ability to respond imaginatively to alterity. The guide's (re)introduction of imagination

¹⁷ Attridge, 'The Department of English', 46.

¹⁸ Lisa Fabry and Tony Buzan, *Romeo and Juliet: William Shakespeare*, Teach Yourself Literature Guides (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), viii.

¹⁹ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xi.

²⁰ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, viii.

²¹ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xi.

²² McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, vi.

²³ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, vii.

²⁴ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, vii.

and empathy into the student's order of priorities is carried out, *not* in the spirit of cultivating critical responses, but for the purposes of their instrumental value.

In underrating the importance of the reader's relationship to her text, Buzan's memorisation technique undermines the importance of critical thought. As Collini puts it, training people in tricks of memory – without critical reflection – is not a useful approach to humanities education: 'Understanding does not work like a drop-down "dialog box": it involves reflection on the ways the newly encountered material does or doesn't fit with categories and experiences which the understander already possesses'.²⁵ Within the current debate about the place and value of humanities disciplines – which provides the framework for Collini's comment – arguments have been made to the effect that the continued social relevance of humanities disciplines lies primarily in their abilities to cultivate imaginative, empathetic, and critical dispositions in individuals. These arguments are most often associated with the contention, exemplified by the approach of Martha Nussbaum, that such qualities are necessary for the functioning of a (global) democracy,²⁶ and have been described by Helen Small as the 'Democracy Needs Us' argument.²⁷ As argued more extensively in chapter one, neoliberalism compromises critical thinking and undermines non-utilitarian values. The idea that neoliberalism's cynical and pragmatic take on education leads to the suppression of critical thinking is reconcilable with the 'Democracy Needs Us' argument, where humanities disciplines are viewed as necessary antidotes to instrumental and pragmatic economic policy. These ideas, moreover, resonate with the notion that literary response is not reducible to memorised pre-formed responses such as those offered by *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*. Taken together, these considerations suggest that the devaluation in study guides of imaginative responses and critical thinking is symptomatic of an instrumentalism in education which can have detrimental social effects. The discussion will return, however, towards the end of this chapter, to the plausibility of an overly idealistic notion of disinterest as a means of defence against such instrumental pressures. For such defences, informed as they are by the social mission, have an instrumentalism of their own which is not easily combined with conceptions of a pure disinterest.

In *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, the governing presence of the neoliberal ethos is further confirmed by the guide's encouragement of the pragmatic utilisation of a certain conception of *fun*. When *Teach Yourself Literature* likens the use of the imagination in

²⁵ Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 145.

²⁶ See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

²⁷ Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125-50.

literary reading to photography and video production, this is underpinned not just by the assumption that students are disconnected from their own capacities for imagining, but also by the assumption that students are more familiar with the medium of film than with that of literature. Sentences such as the following seem, what's more, to presume that students are not only unfamiliar, but also *uninspired* by the study of literature: 'Mind Maps are fast, efficient, effective and, importantly, *fun* to do!'²⁸ The implied expectation here that Shakespeare and other literary classics are stuffy and tiresome to students, and that Mind Maps are needed to make studying *fun*, is supported by the use of comic 'down with the kids' rhetoric. This occurs most frequently where the *Teach Yourself Literature* guide encourages the reader to take a break (the frequent pauses being part of the memorisation technique): 'Feel like you've just seen a ghost? Take a break';²⁹ 'Hamlet talks to himself – take a break before you start doing the same';³⁰ 'Take a break before digging into the graveyard scene!'³¹ The comic value of these imperatives presuppose a certain kind of enjoyment – one that is external to the study of literature and which, in an instrumental bid to make learning more efficient, can be imported and imposed on literary studies, rather than drawn out of the material: 'Have *fun* while you learn – it has been shown that students who make their studies enjoyable understand and remember everything better and gets [sic] the highest grades'.³² When, in this way, the method is presumed to be more interesting to students than the educational content, the guide neglects to consider that students might benefit from engaging with literature in other, less 'fun', ways.

In cutting out the intermediary educational institutions, moreover, the study guide operates within consumer culture. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the economically motivated culture industry, which separates people from their imaginative predispositions and offers ready-made responses in their stead, offers amusement – or *fun* – 'as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again'.³³ So, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides'* imperative to take recreational breaks and import elements of that recreation into the study process resonates with Adorno and Horkheimer's well-known observation that 'amusement under late capitalism is the

²⁸ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, viii.

²⁹ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 50.

³⁰ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 58.

³¹ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 82.

³² Fabry and Buzan, *Romeo and Juliet*, viii.

³³ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), 137.

prolongation of work'.³⁴ In *Teach Yourself Literature*, the employment of 'fun' in the learning process is used in this way and taken to make studying more efficient. Its emphasis on efficiency, moreover, reflects the series' pursuit of a maximisation of profit – in the economic sense of actually selling more study guides, but also in the sense that improved examination results is a kind of profit. Moreover, the series' additional recommendation that the efficiency-inducing application of 'fun' also allows the student 'more free time to pursue *your other fun activities*' [emphasis mine],³⁵ offers the maximisation of free time, too, as a form of profit. The centrality of the notion of efficiency thus further confirms the dominance of the neoliberal ethos within this series – efficiency being a favoured shibboleth of neoliberal phraseology.

To introduce fun – and thus, of course, efficiency – into the study of classic literary works, this study guide series uses pop-cultural references, such as allusions to film, as well as a particular style of comic prose which the writers and editors imagine will appeal to a teenage audience. This relegation of the status of high culture in favour of popular culture is symptomatic of general developments within the cultural sphere. In *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, that hierarchical shift is given expression, not just in pop-cultural rhetoric and allusion, but also in the reduced influence of the liberal humanist impulse – an impulse which, inherited from Arnold, is tied to humanist views of the importance of high culture's hegemony for the prevention of unimaginative habitual responses. Thus cleared away, this ideological current which seeks to thwart the study guide's project of invoking habitual responses no longer obstructs the study guide's instrumentally driven use of pop-cultural forms to appeal to the student consumer. Here, one might be tempted to claim that the series *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, in its promotion of 'stock responses', is governed by the Leavisite conception of 'standardisation and levelling down'.³⁶ From a Leavisite perspective, the example of the 'imagination memory principle' would be taken to demonstrate that students' powers of imagination have been blunted on visual pop-cultural media such as film, which leave them unable to experience literature in an imaginative and enriching way, and render them all the more receptive to the facile stock responses of the study guide. Without, of course, accepting Leavis's assumption that popular cultural expressions dull the mind, we can conclude that the disinterested humanist ideology associated with high culture and opposed to the instrumental use of the literary is untenable

³⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 137.

³⁵ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xii.

³⁶ F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), 3.

within the neoliberal ethos. Analogously, for Bill Readings, it was not until after the tight link between culture and the nation state had come undone that the (now ruined) university could take on its ideology of ‘excellence’.³⁷ Popular culture, however, lacks the conservative ideological resistance of high culture to ‘excellence’, and so can more easily be appropriated by neoliberal ideology and made to serve its cause. This explains why liberal humanism must give way even whilst the products of high culture remain the topic of the study guide.

Brodie’s Notes on Chosen English Texts: disinterest and disciplinary anxiety

The study guide has a reputation for being an exemplar of a reductive instrumentalisation of culture and literary pedagogy, and as we have seen in the above analysis of *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, this is in several respects a legitimate accusation. However, in the previous chapters of this thesis, the discussion has sought to show that the picture is more complicated, insofar as the study guide genre is a product of a heritage of literary humanism and philanthropically-minded educational policy integral to that perspective from which many critics of the guide conduct their defence of disinterest and the humanities. The dominance of the neoliberal ethos and its heavily instrumental rationale in the series *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* around the year 2000 is thrown into sharp relief when we compare that series with publications from the 1950s within the series *Notes on Chosen English Texts*. In *Notes on Chosen English Texts*, the humanist impulse is significantly more pronounced – to the disadvantage, of course, of instrumentality. In stark contrast with the instrumental ethos of *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, the 1958 *Notes on Chosen English Texts* guide on Keats’s poems and odes betrays a deep discomfort with its own instrumental format. The publication reflects a strict division between the practical and aesthetic spheres in its adoption of an exacting disinterested ideal which elevates Keats’s poetic genius over all things practical:

Keats’s passionate love of beauty turned him away from the world of men and affairs. His poetry shows no awareness of the times in which he lived and has no connection with practical affairs or the political ideas of his time. [...] He is a pure artist, scarcely distracted at all from devotion to a full and sensuous beauty.³⁸

Reflected here, in this early study guide, is the disinterested ideal at its most problematic for the purposes of aesthetic education: in its dismissal of ‘the world of men and affairs’, the ideal suppresses possibilities for the systematic and pragmatic teaching of – and thus the

³⁷ See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³⁸ Norman T. Carrington, *John Keats: Longer Poems and Odes*, *Notes on Chosen English Texts*, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1958), 8.

broader dissemination of – disinterested attitudes. In fact, *Notes on Chosen English Texts* on Keats adheres to an ideal of disinterest which risks perceiving education itself as excessively instrumental:

With little knowledge of medieval literature by a magic touch he brings the medieval world back to life; with no Greek scholarship he captures the Greek spirit more than any other poet. [...] In *Hyperion* he feels intuitively the association of the powers in nature with human forms. This was the spirit which gave birth to the Greek myths, and here is the secret of Keats's recapture of the Greek spirit without Greek learning. He had the same feeling for physical and sensuous beauty as the Greeks. The world of Greece is not to him a world of statues of dead men, but a living world that speaks to him. He feels for himself its method of expressing the loveliness of the world without having to *go back* to it.³⁹

The Romantic ideal expressed here is one of *pure* disinterest: here, the poetic genius, 'by a magic touch', operates independently of any instrumental means – including knowledge, book learning and education. In its preference for Keats's 'intuitive' approach over methodical work, the citation exposes the incompatibility of the disinterested ideal and the pedagogical codification of the literary for which purpose the study guide genre was established. Thus it reflects the very dilemma which underpinned Arnold's transmission problem and which both informed and occasioned the development of the study guide genre.

This ideal of a pure disinterest, although unsustainable due to the disciplinary anxiety it causes, runs through the sample material from the 1950s. As in the guide on Keats, the ideal is continually described in relation to its opposite, instrumentality. As opposed to *Teach Yourself Literature*'s technical treatment of the literary as information and its pragmatic employment of methods such as the 'imagination memory principle', the *Notes on Chosen English Texts* publications display a strong preference for a more intuitive approach. Hence, aesthetic experience and imaginative response are prioritised over what is viewed as overly didactic and analytic book learning. The *Notes on Chosen English Texts* on *Hamlet* from 1954 and on *Romeo and Juliet* from 1958 emphasise that, as opposed to the people of 'today', Elizabethan people 'saw in the drama a reflection of their own life and experience; its appeal was in no wise analytical or educational, but human'.⁴⁰ This idea of 'human' experience as opposed to 'educational' appeal also governs the following quotation: 'There is a danger in over-emphasising the moral of a work of art and not trusting it to make its own imaginative and spiritual appeal'.⁴¹ *Teach Yourself Literature* lacks this fraught dialectic between instrumentality and disinterest because, in that series, the former has thoroughly

³⁹ Carrington, *Keats*, 9.

⁴⁰ Norman T. Carrington, *Notes on Shakespeare: Hamlet*, Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1954), p. 8; Norman T. Carrington, *Notes on Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*, Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1958), 16.

⁴¹ Carrington, *Hamlet*, 7.

outcompeted the latter. The earlier *Notes on Chosen English Texts* samples, however, are characterised by a constant tug of war between disinterest and instrumentality occasioned by the incompatibility of the liberal humanism which governs the study guide genre ideologically and the instrumental pedagogy which determines its format. Thus, where the instrumental format is most pronounced, such as in study questions, these early guides compensate for their matter-of-fact treatment of the literary through a strong aesthetic focus on the disinterested contemplation of beauty: “Give the meaning of “Beauty too rich for use””;⁴² ‘Quote or refer to any superbly beautiful passages of poetry in the play, pointing out in what their beauty consists’;⁴³ ‘Quote (a) any three beautiful or wise thoughts from the play, saying by whom they were spoken and under what circumstances; (b) any three similes and any three metaphors, with comments on their aptness and beauty’.⁴⁴ This pragmatic emphasis on beauty in the study questions cannot, however, reunite the study guide with its pre-codified ideal: that of the poet who ‘rejoices in beauty wherever he finds it, [who] is caught up and ravished by it and offers himself to its creative spell’.⁴⁵

The *Notes on Chosen English Texts* guides all display a typically liberal humanist sympathy with the post-Kantian idea that the aesthetic judgement is both subjective and universal. Hence, the ‘beauty of Shakespeare’s language is a continual joy to every generation’,⁴⁶ and the ‘power of Keats’s work is in his passionate love of beauty’.⁴⁷ This idea attributes authority to aesthetic judgement in matters of literary pedagogy because the judgement that a text is beautiful is taken to require universal consensus. Where *Teach Yourself Literature* indicated a decline in the status of high culture in favour of popular culture and, moreover, appealed to science to lend its guides authority, *Notes on Chosen English Texts*, conversely, appeal to the great poets and authors of the humanist tradition, such as Milton, Coleridge, and Spenser, as authoritative.⁴⁸ In keeping with this perspective in which beauty and culture signify authority, each of the *Notes on Chosen English Texts* gives a section on the life of the author in question, concentrating on the author’s cultural cultivation and the author’s understanding of the beautiful in art and nature. Here, we learn

⁴² Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 114.

⁴³ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 113.

⁴⁴ Carrington, *Hamlet*, 81.

⁴⁵ Carrington, *Keats*, 6.

⁴⁶ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 11.

⁴⁷ Carrington, *Keats*, 6.

⁴⁸ Carrington, *Hamlet*, 14-15 and 46; Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 31; Carrington, *Keats*, 5.

of Shakespeare's education in Latin and Greek.⁴⁹ We learn of Keats's study of Latin, and of how his love of literature was cultivated through reading Chapman's translation of Homer as well as Elizabethan dramatists. Moreover, we learn about his love of 'nature in all her aspects', and about his access to a library after leaving school.⁵⁰ On account, presumably, of Austen's female gender, we learn more about her family life than of her education, but here, too, we are told that 'she eagerly read the literature of the eighteenth century' and that she 'delighted in the beauties of nature'.⁵¹

When the aesthetic judgement of the beautiful is mobilised as an authority in this way, this constitutes another expression of the study guide's ambivalent view of codification, and thus a repetition of the problem Arnold faced in writing his *Bible Reading for Schools*. Whilst its effects are taken to be immediate and objective, literary beauty is *not* immediately accessible to *everyone*. The fact that literary beauty is not immediately accessible suggests the need to *teach* the aesthetic appreciation of the beautiful – despite the fact that, theoretically, this ought not to be necessary. Beauty in literature is taken to need no explanation, and yet, at the same time, explanation is exactly what the study guide seeks to offer. Because *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, is for everyone, and 'by no means reserved for men and women of Italian, or any other, race',⁵² the study guide must, in order to make it accessible, make use of some form of interested pedagogy. The ambivalence about its role in this scenario is evident, for instance, when, in setting out a time-table of the plot, one guide adds, in a sudden burst of humanist resistance to the instrumentality of this exercise, that the 'student will probably get a surprise when he sees this time-table set out, for although swift when its time is analysed, the play is not so swift in its general impression'.⁵³ Here, the study guide expresses an unease about the nature of literary analysis, as well as a conflicted loyalty to what Knights has described as 'an implicit injunction to the effect that the most important things defy being made explicit: if you attempt to spell them out, the colour leaches from them'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 6.

⁵⁰ Carrington, *Keats*, 5.

⁵¹ J.B.E. Turner, *Notes on Jane Austen: Mansfield Park*, Notes on Chosen English Texts, ed. Norman T. Carrington (London: James Brodie Ltd, 1952), 4.

⁵² Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 18.

⁵³ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 9.

⁵⁴ Ben Knights, 'English on its Borders' in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline*, 20.

The centrality of plot: the battle ground of interest and disinterest

The study guide's persistent ambivalence about its own instrumental format is nowhere more prevalent than in its treatment of plot. The study guide's use of the term, as described in chapter two, corresponds to the narratological concept of *fabula*: the raw material of a story, or the chronological structure of *what is told* within the literary work. The idea of *fabula* as a pre-existing, and somehow concentrated, version of the entire literary work is essential to the study guide's instrumental function, enabling it to proceed as though the plot represents an objective point of reference for use within literary pedagogy and assessment.⁵⁵ By the 1950s, the plot-driven study guide format had been firmly established, and, in keeping with this, *Brodie's Chosen English Texts* from this early period include questions which are designed to ensure that the student has understood and remembers the events of the plot, such as '[w]hat was the "unhappy fortune" which prevented Romeo from getting the Friar's letter?'⁵⁶ In the much later 2000 *Teach Yourself Literature* guide on *Hamlet* this emphasis on plot has become so strong that the guide mistakenly uses the word 'plot' to refer to the dramatic work as a whole: Shakespeare uses "'big" themes in his *plots*' [emphasis mine].⁵⁷ When, likewise, the guide teaches that Shakespeare's big themes are 'universal, philosophical ideas about belief – much more than just part of the *plot*' [emphasis mine],⁵⁸ this reveals a conflation of elementary narratological concepts, which results from the study guide genre's facile overestimation of the importance of plot for the purposes of literary appreciation. As I argued in chapter two, the centrality of the plot-driven format in study guides is a result of the imperative to codify what resists codification for pedagogical purposes. When *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* use the term 'plot' to refer to the whole literary work, then, this is not simply an expression of a neoliberal inclination to simplify for the sake of efficiency. It also represents an exaggeration of the study guide's generic reliance on plot structure – a dominant instrumental characteristic which predates neoliberalism's influence on study guides. The peculiar focus in *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* on memorisation techniques seems somewhat less misplaced if we consider that study guides, since the inauguration of the A-level system, have adhered to a similar logic. In fact, the

⁵⁵ When study guides use the term 'plot', this is underpinned by the facile realist conception of *fabula* which I describe in chapter two. For the purposes of clarity and continuity with the quotations from study guides within this section, I too will employ the study guide's use of the term here.

⁵⁶ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 110.

⁵⁷ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, xiv.

⁵⁸ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 29.

heavily humanist *Notes on Chosen English Texts* of the 1950s offered so-called ‘context questions’ to ensure that the student had understood, and remembered, the events of the plot correctly and in the right sequence.

Together with the genre’s self-advertising and its explicit exam-focused rationale, the plot-driven format is the strongest expression of the study guide’s instrumentality. And whilst marketing and sales represent the most important external motivating factor for the study guide genre in its modern manifestation, the idea of plot constitutes the heart of the study guide’s generic format. It informs both text summaries and study questions, providing the arena for the internal battle between disinterest and instrumentality. Whilst in the *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* the disinterested ideal has been stifled, the much earlier series *Notes on Chosen English Texts* is engaged in a constant resistance against its own plot-driven structure, manifest in statements such as: ‘It would be a mistake to think that the borrowing of the outline of the story in any way detracts from Shakespeare’s genius. *The plot is the least important part of a play* [emphasis mine]. [...] Artistic creation bears the same relation to plot as architecture to bricks and mortar’. *Romeo and Juliet*, we are told, has a thin and incredible plot, yet is ‘one of the world’s greatest plays because Romeo and Juliet are what Shakespeare has made them’.⁵⁹ Here, the study guide’s humanist impulse attempts to negotiate with the instrumental guide format and its adherence to a plot-centred template.

As my analysis of the realist norm in study guides on Hardy’s fiction has shown, the awkward fit between the study guide’s plot-driven method and literary works which are not themselves similarly plot-driven tends to occasion dismissive literary critique within the study guide: works which resist the study guide’s restricted method are themselves viewed as awkward. In the pronouncedly ambivalent *Notes on Chosen English Texts* on Keats, this conflict, too, is palpable. Keats is seen to fail at narrative poetry because ‘Endymion’, for example, is unfit for the study guide’s plot-treatment: ‘As a narrative it possesses no coherence, unity or sense of proportion, no concentration on a single purpose: digressions are frequent – wherever there is anything beautiful by the way to describe – digressions with the scantiest relation to the theme, and so the poem is discursive and has no backbone’.⁶⁰ Keats, we are told, ‘just revels’ in his imagination, ‘forgetting that in a story there should be nothing that does not lead to the climax’. Instead of moving forwards, his stories ‘scramble about in higgledy-piggledy fashion, and the poem becomes confused’.⁶¹ This guide, being unusually hesitant about the targeted nature of the plot-driven format, insists, however, that

⁵⁹ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 10.

⁶⁰ Carrington, *Keats*, 10.

⁶¹ Carrington, *Keats*, 10.

this flawed plot-structure is not of greater consequence than the poem's disinterested beauty: the 'appeal of the poem is in its isolated beauties, in its detail, richness and colour of description, particularly description of nature',⁶² and suggests that the student read it aloud simply to 'listen to the beautiful use of alliteration'.⁶³ But when the guide nonetheless returns to the idea of the importance of plot, and gives a contrived and peculiar summary of the poem with an extensive glossary, complete with corresponding 'context questions', it is as though the writer has wanted to rebel, with Keats, against the strictness of the study guide's plot-driven organisation, yet has had to force himself to stay within the format. Considering that the writer, Norman T. Carrington, was general editor of this first UK study guide series, it is likely that this reluctant adherence to the guide's instrumental emphasis on plot is due to his vested interest in establishing a predictable study guide formula. However, because Carrington, at the same time, feels the instrumental format to be at odds with Keats's position within the disinterested tradition, the dialectical tension between disinterest and instrumentality becomes especially tangible on this point, performatively enacting the genre's internal conflict.

In keeping with this sense of conflict and confusion, the guide offers summaries of individual poems in an uncharacteristically unsystematic way. The interest of the poem 'Isabella', like that of 'Endymion', is taken to lie 'more in its treatment than in any events that take place'.⁶⁴ For 'Isabella', though, Carrington gives up on the plot summary altogether, and gives instead a point-by-point list summarising features of the poem 'for convenience'.⁶⁵ For 'Hyperion', where again Keats's 'lack of narrative and dramatic power' makes itself felt,⁶⁶ we are given, in place of a summary, a slightly longer commentary and then a glossary for each Book. Short commentaries and glossaries, along with summaries of poetic features, are given for both 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and 'Lamia'. The Odes are each given a short commentary and a glossary. The 'Ode to Psyche', slightly differently, is broken down, stanza by stanza, in an explanation of the development, not of the plot, but of the 'thought of the Ode'.⁶⁷

⁶² Carrington, *Keats*, 11.

⁶³ Carrington, *Keats*, 11.

⁶⁴ Carrington, *Keats*, 21.

⁶⁵ Carrington, *Keats*, 21.

⁶⁶ Carrington, *Keats*, 27.

⁶⁷ Carrington, *Keats*, 54-55.

The same difficulty is evident in the disparity between study questions which thematise the tension between beauty (disinterest) and plot (instrumentality), and the plot-focused ‘context questions’. Observe, for instance the following examples of the former category: ‘Briefly tell the story of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, with some quotation. Which do you consider the more important element – the poet’s artistic skill or the actual story?’;⁶⁸ ‘Consider Keats as a narrative poet’;⁶⁹ ‘Suppose a friend said to you that he saw nothing in poetry. Write down what you would say in defence of poetry, using the poems of Keats as a basis for your remarks’.⁷⁰ In contrast, the plot-related ‘context questions’, despite the guide’s heavy emphasis on Keats’s lack of narrative interest, seek to test the student’s understanding of plot sequence – or, of the ‘plain sense’ of the poems: ‘Why are these troubles mentioned?’;⁷¹ ‘Who were “they”? Mention the name of one or two’;⁷² ‘To whom is this addressed?’;⁷³ ‘Briefly give the subject-matter of the speech of any one of them and say how it was received’.⁷⁴ However, in keeping with this guide’s constant dialectic between its humanist and instrumental impulses, the ‘context questions’ section, too, is internally fraught. In fact, the majority of this guide’s context questions are concerned to contextualise outside of the plot-structures of the individual poems, and mainly relate to the poems’ allusions to Greek mythology. These particular ‘context questions’, then, mainly refer back to Carrington’s glossaries, which he has employed largely to substitute plot summaries. All in all, the guide’s undisciplined blend of explanation, commentary and summary tells of the difficulty, at this moment in the study guide’s history, of codifying such paradigmatically disinterested texts as Keats’s poetry, especially in terms of plot. Carrington gives us the impression that Keats’s works cannot successfully be tamed by the study guide format, for Keats ‘has no genius for telling a story, but in describing an object or a scene he is unrivalled. Hence the ode, where there is no movement, is particularly suited to his genius’.⁷⁵

The study guide’s ‘plot treatment’ is of course more tenable in guides which concentrate on narrative or dramatic works, or perhaps on the poetry of more narrative poets.

⁶⁸ Carrington, *Keats*, 49.

⁶⁹ Carrington, *Keats*, 66.

⁷⁰ Carrington, *Keats*, 67.

⁷¹ Carrington, *Keats*, 68.

⁷² Carrington, *Keats*, 72.

⁷³ Carrington, *Keats*, 73.

⁷⁴ Carrington, *Keats*, 72.

⁷⁵ Carrington, *Keats*, 63.

The overall impression of study guides on poetry from all decades is that the difficulty of summarising a poem according to a model which has been developed for narrative texts, causes guides to waver in relation to their own plot-driven format. Nevertheless, more recent guides on Keats do seem to arrive at a less conflicted compromise than Carrington's in summarising the *message* of individual poems rather than attempting to summarise their *plots*. Moreover, these guides seek to circumvent the unsustainable plot-focus by way of 'critical commentary on individual aspects or common features of the genre being examined', and the technical examination of poems – 'rhyme, rhythm, for instance'.⁷⁶ As I argued in chapter two, the study guide genre tends to favour novels that comply with certain realist expectations accompanying the guide's simple handling of plot. For example, Austen's tightly plotted *Mansfield Park* offers little resistance to the study guide's treatment, and study guides on this novel appear less problematic. However, I have shown that Hardy's novels, whilst they otherwise fit the bill of realist narratives, are disparaged by study guides because of their frequent breaks with the guides' realist norm – as are Ibsen's later dramatic works. Whilst Hardy and Ibsen's incredible plots are taken to indicate literary failure, Shakespeare's genius, in *Notes on Chosen English Texts* as well as in the much later *Brodie's Notes*, is accentuated through his imaginative treatment of weak plots: 'A story with a "realistic" plot has no life if the characters are wooden, but a crude plot becomes alive when living people inform it';⁷⁷ 'for all [...] its excessive reliance on coincidence, [*Romeo and Juliet*] was immediately, and has remained a great poetic success'.⁷⁸ The 1990-2000 *York Notes Advanced* series expresses a similar hesitancy about the plot-centric treatment of Shakespearean drama, but formulated in historical rather than aesthetic terms: 'Realism is a comparatively recent literary convention, established by the novel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.⁷⁹ But with varying degrees of internal reluctance, study guides consistently focus on realism and plot coherence; and even where study guides feel compelled to explain the mismatch between the literary text and the plot-driven format, this is itself a strong indication of the premium the format places upon tightly plotted narratives. Because of its significance for the study guide, moreover, the treatment of plot provides a

⁷⁶ Graham Handley, *Selected Poems and Letters of John Keats*, Brodie's Notes, ed. Graham Handley (London: Pan Books, 1991), v.

⁷⁷ Carrington, *Romeo and Juliet*, 10.

⁷⁸ David Scholar, *Romeo and Juliet: Shakespeare*, Brodie's Notes, ed. Graham Handley (London: Pan Books, 1990), 92.

⁷⁹ N.H. Keeble, *Romeo and Juliet: William Shakespeare*, *York Notes Advanced*, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: York Press, 1998), 65.

particularly clear view of the diachronic evolution of the genre's conflict of loyalties between interest and disinterest.

Brodie's Notes and York Notes Advanced: lowered defences against instrumentality

The above comparison between *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* from the later period and *Notes on Chosen English Texts* from the earlier has focused on two extremely polarised examples, one highly instrumental and the other strongly humanist. The significant ideological differences between them illustrate the potential for polarisation within the study guide's combination of disinterest and instrumentality. Having illustrated that potential for polarisation, where each pole sits firmly at one end of our historical survey, we now move on to flesh out this diachronic analysis with a less hyperbolic account of increased instrumentality in study guide series from the latter period. For whilst *Notes on Chosen English Texts* represents the only series in the 1951-65 time period, an analysis of *Brodie's Notes* and *York Notes Advanced* from the period 1990-2000 will allow a fairer description of the escalation of instrumental rationality within examples of the study guide genre where the neoliberal ethos is less flamboyant than in *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*.

A new development affects the genre at this time, when critical theory finds its way into study guides and adds a complicating dimension to the polar relationship between interest and disinterest. For the discipline generally, the 1980s and 90s saw the development of various approaches within criticism and theory which Attridge and Jane Elliott describe as participating 'in one way or another in the critique of the aesthetic, exposing the manner in which it made illegitimate claims to objectivity, transcendence and universality while in fact endorsing particular, historically-determined structures of dominance'.⁸⁰ In line with these theoretical and critical movements, my discussion so far seems to put the notion of a disinterested aesthetic in question. Nevertheless, as I will later go on to discuss, I hold that some notion of disinterest – to challenge the binary opposition reflected in study guides – can be rescued via the re-description of aesthetic experience as a composite, and *impure*, mode of appreciation. The 1990-2000 study guides series, however, rather than resolve their polar tension through such re-negotiations, come to express, in different ways, the notion that the liberal humanist aesthetic has become unfashionable. In this re-evaluation of the humanist impulse as *passé*, moreover, the guides come to lower their levels of defence against the growing influence of instrumental rationality.

⁸⁰ Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge, 'Introduction', in *Theory After 'Theory'*, ed. Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge (Routledge: London, 2011), 11.

In the *Brodie's Notes* materials from the 1990s, perhaps the most striking innovation is the addition of a list of study questions which are not aimed at the specific work under interrogation, but which relate to *any* literary work: 'Write about a novel you have read in which fate or coincidence plays an important part'; 'Give an account of the effects of conflict in a play or story'; 'Sometimes the minor characters in a book influence events. Examine any two minor characters in your chosen book and show what part they play in its action'.⁸¹ These additional questions are clearly governed by the plot-centric format, and many are focused directly, as are these examples, on the fabula and structure of action. The advent of these generally applicable plot-focused questions, moreover, confirms that the formulaic makeup of the study guide format is designed for universal applicability within English literary studies. It thus represents a form of codification which, at the level of format, undermines the specificity of particular literary works and their particular contexts. This 'one-size-fits-all' treatment of literary works confirms that the social mission of liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy has lost its central position within the discipline in favour of an instrumentalism which renders literature, as Readings puts it, 'as one field of knowledge among others'.⁸² For when instrumentalism replaces the ideal of cultural cultivation in education, 'knowledge tends to disappear, to be replaced as a goal by facility in the processing of information: something should be known, yet it becomes less and less urgent that we know what it is that should be known'.⁸³ Indeed, the refashioning of the student identity, described by Knights and discussed above in the section on *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, emphasises transferable skills and prefers instrumental study techniques over the investigation of specific literary works on their own terms. This emphasis on such techniques implies that the choice of literary text is less interesting than those transferable study skills, and renders the text itself arbitrary beyond its place on examination boards' lists of set texts. But despite this proximity to the *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* of the same period, the 1990s *Brodie's Notes* have not ceased to be influenced by the liberal humanist disinterested ideal. The resistance to codification which governs the disciplinary anxiety of English literary studies is still evident in quotations such as the following, illustrating the longevity of that anxiety in A-level education:

students using words like 'alliteration', 'simile' or 'assonance' should not treat them as labels, for in themselves such simple definitions are never enough. What matters is what a poet achieves and how

⁸¹ Scholar, *Romeo and Juliet*, 95.

⁸² Readings, *University in Ruins*, 86.

⁸³ Readings, *University in Ruins*, 86.

he achieves it; and good criticism should attempt to explain this, rather than fall back on a terminology that categorizes without evaluation.⁸⁴

This passage suggests that the value of the literary work lies beyond what can be described and measured in the language of codification, and thus recalls the 1958 *Notes on Chosen English Texts* guide on Keats and its problematic resistance to pedagogy. However, a closer comparison between *Brodie's Notes* and the *Notes on Chosen English Texts* from which it developed, reveals the much stronger influence of instrumentality on the series in the 1990s. As discussed in chapter two, the persistence of the humanist impulse in later guides is often a result of lazy writing and editing, encouraging – for pragmatic reasons – overlap, repetition, and borrowing within study guide editions and series. This pragmatic instrumentality is cumulative because it increases with each overlapping publication, even as it inadvertently helps keep the humanist impulse alive in the content of the text that is being reused. Despite the wide time gap between the 1990s *Brodie's Notes* and its 1950s forerunner, overlap is partly responsible both for the increased levels of instrumentality and for the continued influence of liberal humanism. The gradual perfecting of the study guide format over the years is also marked by increasing instrumentality, in the course of which, for example, the guide's internal resistance to a plot-driven format, so easily observable in the 1958 guide on Keats, has been weakened. Evidence of this process is found primarily in the many places where the new guides *do not* overlap with older guides, and specifically in corresponding sections where the rhetoric of early guides had been unambiguously liberal humanist. Those sections have been rewritten to jettison the unfashionable liberal humanism; in the 1991 *Brodie's Notes* guide on Keats, for example, the section on the author's life has been radically changed and evidence of liberal humanism weeded out. In place of the 1958 guide's emphasis on Keats' anti-intellectual and aesthetic experience of beauty, the 1991 guide gives a sober and factual biography chronicling events and explaining literary influences. The diminished ambivalence towards the form and function of plot summaries is apparent in the straightforward summary given for 'Hyperion', without any discussion of Keats' narrative skill.⁸⁵ A telling instance is the retention of the study question, 'Examine in some detail Keats's qualities as a narrative poet',⁸⁶ which is directly inherited from *Notes on Chosen English Texts*, where it participated in the tug of war between disinterest and the plot-driven

⁸⁴ Handley, *Keats*, 3.

⁸⁵ Handley, *Keats*, 26-31.

⁸⁶ Handley, *Keats*, 63.

format.⁸⁷ But as repeated in the new *Brodie's Notes*, it has been stripped of its original context and thus depleted of its meaning as part of that troublesome conflict.

Even in its acts of elimination, moreover, *Brodie's Notes* is haunted by the spirit of the overlap method – which typically conserves rather than removes. In its revision and rewriting, *Brodie's Notes* does not re-contextualise or compensate for the deleted material by appealing to new theoretical or critical perspectives. Hence, once the humanism has been removed, the guide simply fills the gap with a fettered version of the same or similar material, depleted of its context. A different approach was used when, in the late 1990s, *York Notes* was reconfigured and re-launched as two separate series, *York Notes* for GCSE and *York Notes Advanced* for A-level and undergraduate students. The latter guides were updated to suit developments within criticism and theory with which study guides had typically been out of touch before this innovation. The attempt to make these study guides more academically respectable within the discipline of English was in keeping with a marketing strategy which characterised *York Notes* since its beginning in 1980, when the title of the series ‘was chosen because it’s emblematic of English culture’.⁸⁸ The branding of this series as more cultural than other series, along with the inevitable, if spurious, association with the University of York, was perhaps intended to fortify the impression that *York Notes* is more academically serious than other series, and no doubt links in with its renewed attention to more recent developments within the discipline. Thus, *York Notes Advanced* represents an advance within the study guide genre because the trickle-down effect, which I described in chapter two, has been accelerated by a rejection of the overlap method. Rather than being simply removed or tempered, the unfashionable and ‘outdated’ ideology of liberal humanism is addressed and contextualised in terms of modern literary and critical theories:

The formalists have been accused of accepting uncritically and reproducing methodologically one of the ideals of Romanticism. New historicists argue that, as the Romantic poets searched for some essential, eternal truth and beauty which transcended the mortal world of change and process, so the formalist critics suggest through their readings that poetry can, by its very nature, offer some ‘universal’ truths which transcend the conflicts and divisions of its historical moment.⁸⁹

This reprioritisation of theory and more up-to-date criticism in *York Notes Advanced* is evident throughout the guides in the underlying disciplinary assumptions made by writers. The guide on Keats, for example, consistently emphasises the outmoded status of formalist

⁸⁷ Carrington, *Keats*, 66.

⁸⁸ Marian Olney (Commissioning Editor, York Press), e-mail message to author, 23 December 2010 (permission obtained).

⁸⁹ Glennis Byron, *John Keats: Selected Poems*, *York Notes Advanced*, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: York Press, 1999), 6-7.

and New Critical approaches and describes Keats as ‘a politicised, historicised poet, a poet whose work is marked not by unity, harmony, synthesis, but by polarities, irreconcilable oppositions, and, above all, doubt’.⁹⁰ The guide on *Hamlet*, similarly, juxtaposes modern critical theories with formalist and New Critical approaches: ‘Traditional theories see *Hamlet* as a work of art that must be taken as it stands, much of the critic’s job being to show how apparently discordant elements within the play relate to one another in a meaningful and persuasive way which engages with perennial human concerns’.⁹¹ On the other hand, like ‘any radical departure, modern critical theory will in time become integrated with the approaches of earlier generations, helping us to see more clearly what any single type of critical analysis can and cannot achieve’.⁹² This new theory-paradigm within the study guide is further reflected in the expansion of the study guide format to include sections focusing on critical history, theoretical approaches, narrative modes, time, structure, social context, history, politics, and bibliographies.

The redefinition of the study guides’ working assumptions in relation to the new theory-paradigm means that the humanist impulse is far less prominent in *York Notes Advanced* than in earlier guides. However, in this series the humanist impulse actually comes to be replaced by a theoretically informed impulse which seeks to fulfil a similar function to humanism within the study guide: that of ensuring that the genre is firmly anchored in the values of the discipline. Whilst the study guide’s link to the disciplinary identity of English literature is taken over by theory, however, the continuity between theory and the liberal humanist aesthetic remains restricted to that function. Beyond retaining the connection between study guide and the discipline, the replacement of humanism by theory – importantly – represents a departure from the ideal of disinterest. That departure was prompted by the deconstruction of the liberal humanist aesthetic carried out by various schools of intellectual enquiry in the 1970s-1990s. The revisionist approach to liberal humanism, Romanticism, formalism, and New Criticism introduced with the new theory-paradigm of *York Notes Advanced* established a significant distance between that series and the study guide genre’s origin in the disinterested ideal.

When the study guide thus mirrors the paradigm shift from humanism to ‘Theory’ within the discipline, this constitutes the point at which the genre reflects most tellingly upon the crisis of English literary studies. For Readings – writing at the time when this paradigm

⁹⁰ Byron, *Keats*, 7.

⁹¹ Lynn Wood and Jeff Wood, *Hamlet: William Shakespeare*, *York Notes Advanced*, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: York Press, 1998), 121.

⁹² Wood and Wood, *Hamlet*, 121.

had only just started to challenge humanism within the study guide – modern critical theories signal ‘the end of the reign of literary culture as the organizing discipline of the University’s cultural mission, for they loosen the tie between the subject and the nation-state’.⁹³ Indeed, Arnold’s national project of cultural cultivation is no longer feasible as a disciplinary ideal: the ‘abstract notion of “citizen” ceases to be an adequate and exhaustive description of the subject [...] when the apparent blankness and universality of the subject of the state is able to be perceived as the repository of privileged markers of maleness, heterosexuality, and whiteness’.⁹⁴ The discipline’s organising principle of literary culture is now irretrievably lost due to the unacceptably retrograde character of its covert elitism. Lost, too, however, is the discipline’s sense of a unified aim or purpose; this loss is reflected in the divergence within the university English department, described by Graff – at roughly the same time as Readings was writing – in terms of ‘conflicts’ to be taught.⁹⁵ As reflected in the study guide, the loss of an organic vision of disinterested culture as a guiding ideal leaves the discipline internally conflicted and thus more vulnerable to the external pressures of neoliberal instrumentalism.

So, whilst in study guides of the past, the humanist impulse has tended to offer at least some internal resistance to the pedagogically motivated instrumental format, the relationship between disinterest and instrumentality has been reconfigured in the 1990-2000 *York Notes Advanced* so as to weaken that resistance. The new theory-paradigm has played a major role in that reconfiguration by establishing, through its focus on anti-humanist theory, a distance from liberal humanism which permits relief from the anxieties of the relationship between disinterest and pedagogy. For example, an intensification of plot summary is apparent in the inclusion of section headings comprised of still more compacted summaries: ‘The Ghost appears and tells Hamlet he was murdered by his brother. He instructs Hamlet to avenge his death’;⁹⁶ ‘The poet reflects upon a Grecian urn and its images’;⁹⁷ ‘Henry Crawford turns his affections towards Fanny; William visits’.⁹⁸ These headings, printed in blue, are designed to stand out and to provide pegs for the memorisation of individual summaries of acts, poems, or chapters. The provision of a section on ‘How to

⁹³ Readings, *University in Ruins*, 87.

⁹⁴ Readings, *University in Ruins*, 88.

⁹⁵ See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007); *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993).

⁹⁶ Wood and Wood, *Hamlet*, 23.

⁹⁷ Byron, *Keats*, 38.

⁹⁸ Delia Dick, *Mansfield Park: Jane Austen*, *York Notes Advanced*, ed. Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares (Harlow: York Press, 1999), 36.

study a novel' and a list of literary terms, with the corresponding terms likewise highlighted in blue throughout the text, are further indications of this increased concentration of targeted pedagogical strategies. The instrumental tendency, moreover, is accompanied by quite rampant self-advertising, evident in the provision of a five page announcement of related series titles, and an order form, along with the amplification of the series' marketing strategies in relation to official learning objectives and assessment criteria (presented at times as the specific needs of the individual student rather than as a systemic index). The instrumental pedagogy of *York Notes Advanced* – doubly fortified as it is by the sharpened focus on assessment *and* the increased distance from disinterest established by the new theory-paradigm – represents a marked increase in the genre's levels of instrumental rationality. As I have shown, a comparable increase is manifest in the less theoretically informed *Brodie's Notes*, where humanism has been simply weeded out, and *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, where the humanist impulse has been suppressed by the neoliberal ethos. In different ways, all three series respond to developments within the discipline. In all three series the humanist impulse which, however flawed, had previously functioned as a buffer against neoliberal instrumentality, has atrophied.

In *York Notes Advanced*, the inclusion of critical perspectives on traditional aesthetics indicates an effort to stay connected to a changing discipline, and as such it represents an important development for the study guide genre. This does not mean, however, that the polar tension between interest and disinterest has been completely removed or resolved. The persistence of that tension is evidenced by the residue of the humanist impulse still noticeable in *York Notes Advanced* guides on Shakespeare, which express a reluctance towards the study guides' new theory-paradigm. Thus, in its explication of more modern criticism, the guide on *Hamlet* takes on a slight air of regret regarding the decline of liberal humanism's hegemonic conception of disinterest: 'What distinguishes radical late-twentieth-century thinkers about the play from those of earlier generations is above all their rejection of the idea that any work or any author can achieve the kind of universality that generations of critics have claimed for *Hamlet* in particular and for Shakespeare more generally – the idea crystallised by Ben Jonson in his tribute to Shakespeare that "He was not of an age, but for all time"⁹⁹. Similar regrets are formulated more strongly in the guide on *Romeo and Juliet*, which is not quite willing to embrace the politically interested concerns of critical theory, and establishes a rhetorical distance between those concerns and 'disinterested' responses: 'These various contemporary approaches characteristically think of themselves as radical and committed to a left-of-centre politics; they believe that

⁹⁹ Wood and Wood, *Hamlet*, 122.

traditional readings of Shakespeare have been contrived (or “fabricated”, as they are fond of saying) to support conservative thinking, traditionalism and the politics of the right’.¹⁰⁰ When the guide goes on to remark that ‘criticism such as [this] is still less impartial’,¹⁰¹ this indicates that the ideal of disinterest, whilst significantly constrained, still poses a challenge to the new theory-driven study guide rhetoric and its politically motivated denial of disinterest.

Unpredictably, the same humanist challenge is reflected in the theory section of *Teach Yourself Literature Guides on Hamlet*. This continuity is unexpected because, whilst in *York Notes Advanced* the theoretical focus signifies a continued relationship with the identity of the discipline, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* are typically out of touch with literary values, focusing on generalised memorisation techniques rather than specific modes of literary response. Presumably, however, this seemingly incongruous section was included in *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* due to the recent influence on the genre of the theory focus in *York Notes Advanced*. Here, the theory section has become part of the generic study guide format through a *Brodie’s Notes*-style overlap and borrowing process. So, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides on Hamlet* borrows from *York Notes Advanced on Romeo and Juliet* the liberal humanist notion that modern literary theories and critical approaches are biased and self-interested: ‘you may feel that much contemporary criticism has very little to do with the play and much to do with critics using what is probably the most famous text in theatre as a platform for exploring their own theories’.¹⁰² When, moreover, this highly formulaic guide complains that feminist critics ‘apply a standard template to artworks’,¹⁰³ the unintended irony is palpable. But despite this at best confused flirtation with the ideal of disinterest, the section is explicitly hostile to and reductive of theoretical developments because of their apparent lack of practical utility. It complains that structuralism has ‘nothing to do with the world of theatre and performance’ where *Hamlet* is ‘still regarded as essentially a script, albeit one of the greatest ever written’, and that post-structuralism is ‘[n]ot very helpful if you are an actor trying to realize a part or a director trying to make the play come alive on stage!’¹⁰⁴ The guide’s defence, however, of what is clearly an instrumentalist view, again falls into the groove of a stock-humanist, and thus anti-

¹⁰⁰ Keeble, *Romeo and Juliet*, 120.

¹⁰¹ Keeble, *Romeo and Juliet*, 120.

¹⁰² McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 97.

¹⁰³ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 97.

¹⁰⁴ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 97.

instrumental, mode of rhetoric: Whilst most literary theories ‘are only marginally to do with the script an Elizabethan playwright wrote for his company of actors!’, the diversity of approaches ‘is a testament to the greatness and universality of the story’.¹⁰⁵ Even in a series where the neoliberal ethos has completely colonised the territory previously occupied by liberal humanism, the rhetoric of the dialectical struggle between disinterest and instrumentality continues to make itself felt, however emptied of meaning.

Assessment criteria and the influence of the National Curriculum

Despite the continued influence of the interest/disinterest dialectic on study guides, the authority of the humanist impulse underwent a significant decline before and during the period 1990-2000. Among the indications of the increase in the genre’s instrumentalist attitude is the intensification of its market-driven ‘packaging’, branding and self-advertising. *Brodie’s Notes*, pitched at GCSE and A-level students, have been ‘adapted to meet the needs of current examination requirements’.¹⁰⁶ The marketing strategy of *York Notes Advanced*, too, is built upon a rhetorical emphasis on expertise and insight into examination requirements as well as the needs of the student consumer: ‘Written by acknowledged literature experts for the specific needs of advanced level and undergraduate students’.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the division of the *York Notes* series into two different sub-series aimed at specific levels of education is an expression of the study guide’s increased alignment with the precise aims and demands of assessment criteria. This synchronisation represents the final realisation of the instrumentalisation demanded by institutionalised pedagogy; literary values are to be codified and ‘objectified’ in order to be taught. It represents the ultimate surrender of the social mission tradition, with its inadvertently instrumental treatment of literature as a means to a socio-political end, to the commodification of the process of *Bildung*. The intensified focus on strategic purpose in all the 1990-2000 study guides, then, means that they, like *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, foreground an ostensibly technical and objective means of assessment to the disadvantage of the discipline’s characteristic concern with individual literary response. This appeal to ‘objective’ authority signposts a shift of emphasis from the study guide’s function as *manual for taste* to its function as *self-help book* for students seeking to increase the exchange value of their human capital.

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy and Buzan, *Hamlet*, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Handley, *Keats*, v.

¹⁰⁷ Keeble, *Romeo and Juliet*, n. pag; Wood and Wood, *Hamlet*, n. pag; Dick, *Mansfield Park*, n. pag; Byron, *Keats*, n. pag.

The tightened bond between the study guide and the conventions of assessment finds motivation in the neoliberal idea of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as a means of governing welfare and education; an idea that rose to prominence during the Thatcher years as part of an overall move towards an individualised enterprise culture.¹⁰⁸ Under the Conservative governments of the 1980s, ‘questions of national economic survival and competition in the world economy came increasingly to be seen [...] as questions of *cultural* reconstruction’, thus spurring the remodelling of ‘institutions along commercial lines and encouraging the acquisition and use of enterprising qualities’.¹⁰⁹ The 1988 Educational Reform Act was carried out in line with a ‘market choice critique of public sector management’,¹¹⁰ targeting the ‘so-called “educational establishment” – principally left-leaning teaching unions, inspectors and teacher trainers – who seemed to favour what the Conservatives saw as highly questionable “progressive” or “child-centred” approaches to teaching’.¹¹¹ The 1988 Educational Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum, on the one hand, in order to standardise the content of education for the purposes of facilitating a more technically predictable system of assessment, thus enabling the introduction of league tables and encouraging the commodification of education according to a quasi-market model.¹¹² On the other hand, the National Curriculum was ‘also about reinforcing “traditional British values” – values that might not be fostered if the curriculum itself was left to market forces’.¹¹³

Professor Brian Cox was appointed by Secretary of State Kenneth Baker to make recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study for the first centralised English curriculum.¹¹⁴ The 1989 Cox Report came to be the focus of much media controversy due to a conflict of interest between the government’s conservative focus and the working group’s disciplinary commitments.¹¹⁵ For example, the working group was

¹⁰⁸ Michael Peters, ‘Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self: A Foucauldian Perspective’, *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 2, no. 2 (2001): 63.

¹⁰⁹ Peters, ‘Education, Enterprise culture’, 63-64

¹¹⁰ Geoff Whitty, ‘Twenty Years of Progress? English Educational Policy 1988 to the Present’, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 36, no. 2 (2008): 165.

¹¹¹ Whitty, ‘Twenty Years of Progress?’, 165.

¹¹² Whitty, ‘Twenty Years of Progress?’, 167.

¹¹³ Whitty, ‘Twenty Years of Progress?’, 169. When the theory section of *Teach Yourself Literature Guides* on *Hamlet* offers a confused liberal humanist rhetoric as part of its conservative, yet instrumental, critique of left-leaning theory, the combined perspectives of neoliberalism and conservative politics recalls the double project of the National Curriculum.

¹¹⁴ See Brian Cox, *Cox on Cox: An English Curriculum for the 1990’s* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991) and Brian Cox, *Cox on Cox: The Battle for the English Curriculum* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

compelled to compose a curriculum which reflected the renegotiations of the traditional canon at work within the discipline in the 1970s and 80s, often carried out in terms of identity politics.¹¹⁶ These debates, however, were at odds with the government's predilection for the established canon of British literature. Cox notes, with reference to Robert Scholes, Terry Eagleton, and Brian Doyle, that the 'desire for a national culture is seen as damagingly conservative, often "racist" and almost inevitably unsympathetic to the rights of women'.¹¹⁷ Another indication of the working group's commitment to the ideals of the discipline lies in the humanist, and avowedly Leavisite, notion that 'the study of literature does foster intelligence and sensibility',¹¹⁸ and that 'the pleasure of reading offers children an extension of their being, and enrichment of life'.¹¹⁹ In 1995, subsequent to the disagreements between the working group and two Conservative governments, the curriculum was reviewed and delimited to 'a statement of the minimum which by law must be taught'.¹²⁰ Cox commented, in line with the working group's commitment to the values of the discipline, that the 'danger of an English curriculum devoted to basics is that testing will also be reduced to basics, and that teachers will be forced to teach to the tests, particularly if their future careers depend to some extent on their schools' position in league tables'.¹²¹ The standardised and paired down curriculum, writes Cox, risks the reduction of pupils and teachers 'to technicians, and the joy and wonder of the subject are lost'.¹²²

The National Curriculum represents the strongest expression of enterprise culture in education in the study guide's history. A-levels are not directly overseen by the National Curriculum, which covers primary and secondary levels: however, A-level education has been equally affected by its strong assertion of neoliberalism in educational thinking, which was, moreover, consolidated and fortified by both Major and Blair governments.¹²³ Furthermore, A-levels were brought within the oversight of related systems, such as the

¹¹⁵ Geoff Whitty and Sally Power, 'Quasi-Markets and Curriculum Control: Making Sense of Recent Education Reform in England and Wales', *Educational Administration Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1997): 224.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1989); John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

¹¹⁷ Cox, *An English Curriculum for the 1990's*, 71.

¹¹⁸ Cox, *An English Curriculum for the 1990's*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Cox, *An English Curriculum for the 1990's*, 76.

¹²⁰ Nicholas Tate, 'Target Vision', *Times Educational Supplement*, 2 December, 1994, 19.

¹²¹ Cox, *The Battle for the English Curriculum*, 2.

¹²² Cox, *The Battle for the English Curriculum*, 1.

¹²³ Whitty, 'Twenty Years of Progress?', 171.

Office for Standards in Education, a non-ministerial department of government initiated by the Major government's 1992 Education Act. The A-level study guide's supportive role in this socio-political environment between 1990 and 2000 should be clear from my account so far; in this period, the study guide's avowed function is to teach to the test. Just as individual teachers and schools are made to compete in league tables, individual students, too, are expected to compete within the same system – and so the neoliberal rhetoric of study guides participates in responsabilising students for their future opportunities and goals. In its capacity as shortcut to exam success, the study guide ultimately encourages the same kind of technical and unimaginative stance towards literature that Cox describes. As we have seen, *Teach Yourself Literature Guides*, even more explicitly than other guides, express the genre's underlying assumptions pertaining to the same lack of joy. Moreover, in teaching to the test, the study guide relies on the predictability of assessment. Contrary to the foundational liberal humanist assumptions of the discipline of English which centre on the idea of disinterested imaginative responses, the student consumer feels entitled to expect that the requirements of the subject can be fulfilled in the strategic and technical ways promoted by the study guide.

An 'impure' disinterest

In previous chapters of this thesis, my consideration of the study guide has highlighted the way in which the ideal of a disinterested cultural sphere has, since the founding moments of the discipline of English literature, been shot through with both interest and instrumentality. That instrumentality has its origin, on the one hand, in the political aims of the social mission tradition where literature serves as a means to a socio-political end, and on the other, in the instrumentalisation demanded by institutionalised pedagogy in which the teaching of literature in itself exerts a pull towards the codification and objectification of literary value. These two registers are linked insofar as literature cannot serve its humanising purpose if the discipline cannot teach the way of thinking required to appreciate literature – if literary appreciation is unteachable, how can it be brought to 'the masses' so that they might feel its effects? The concept of disinterest plays two different roles in the above scenario: one conceptual and one social. Conceptually, the binary opposition between interest and disinterest is not sustainable insofar as disinterest is being mobilised by the social mission for interested purposes. The social role of disinterest, however, is more important. The study guide genre provides a useful metaphor for the latter problem: In its capacity as manual for taste, the study guide testifies to the impossibility of an objective, immediate and

autonomous aesthetic experience. It represents, in this vein, an attempted mediation of the social problem of cultural accessibility, in which disinterest figures as the ‘basis for a mode of consumption specific to the dominant classes’.¹²⁴ Access to culture remains relatively exclusive because acquisition depends upon progressive induction into a particular kind of knowledge; the early study guide, in the role of gatekeeper to such knowledge, commits itself to what Small, with reference both to Arnold and Nussbaum, describes as a ‘guardianship’ model of culture and democracy. On this model, the interested disinterest of the social mission leads into a suspect form of elitism ‘about which, presumably, most of us have proper doubts’.¹²⁵ Small’s criticism can be applied successfully also to the Leavisite project, where the cultured ‘elite’ seeks to save the ‘philistine’ masses: ‘the “us” in “Democracy Needs Us” is taken to refer to those of “us” who are scholars or students of the humanities in the universities’.¹²⁶

However, over the course of the decades separating the sample materials consulted in this chapter, we see a change within the genre where instrumentality becomes ever more dominant, and a simultaneous decline in the rhetoric of disinterest. This chapter’s exploration of the study guide’s changing loyalties, in my view, highlights the importance of vindicating some conception of disinterest in order to resist the dominance of instrumental reason. Insofar as the study guide is a symptom of more general developments in the discipline and pedagogy of English, it can be seen to indicate the important role disinterest plays there in resisting instrumentalising tendencies. The study guide genre has been affected by two key developments in the pervasive *Zeitgeist*: the authority of high culture has declined, placing on the study guide a greater need to justify the liberal humanist interest of its high cultural contents; and political ideas underpinning educational policies have reinforced the study guide’s instrumental impulse to the detriment of its humanist heritage. The diminished presence in study guides of the disinterested ideal, and the repression of the conflict between interest and disinterest which informs the genre, follows from the convergence of two distinct tendencies, which together have tipped the ideological scales decisively in favour of instrumentality: one is the influence of the neoliberal ethos within education, and the other is the theoretically informed deconstruction of the liberal humanist aesthetic. Whereas in the early study guide, the liberal humanist aesthetic worked against the forces of instrumentality, this role now needs to be filled by a new, updated, form of resistance. The project of salvaging ‘disinterest’, however, is undermined by the

¹²⁴ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 330.

¹²⁵ Small, *Value of the Humanities*, 136.

¹²⁶ Small, *Value of the Humanities*, 141.

theoretically informed critique of the socially regressive political connotations of this and other liberal humanist concepts.

a) *The neoliberal ethos and the occasion for a vindication of 'disinterest'*

The neoliberal ethos, with its economically pragmatic instrumentality, has continued to affect education since the year 2000 with seriously detrimental social effects, including the undermining of critical and imaginative thinking. In 2010, Nussbaum wrote that an 'assault' on the arts and humanities 'is currently taking place all over the world'.¹²⁷ As we have seen, the marginalisation of disinterest in study guides is a concrete expression of the grip of the neoliberal ethos on education. Nussbaum notes that curricular content has shifted correspondingly 'away from the material that focuses on enlivening imagination and training the critical faculties toward material that is directly relevant to test preparation'.¹²⁸ This shift in content has brought with it 'an even more baneful shift in pedagogy: away from teaching that seeks to promote questioning and individual responsibility toward force-feeding for good exam results'.¹²⁹ Here, then, there is room for a vindication of a less instrumental, more 'disinterested', literary pedagogy which permits a greater measure of imaginative and critical responses. Indeed, pedagogy holds the key to exposing the flaws in an overly binary opposition between interest and disinterest altogether: if the opposition is genuinely irreconcilable, then disinterested aesthetic appreciation cannot be taught. This might seem to be grounds to reject the notion of disinterest, but it can also provide a key to preserving some notion of disinterest. This is what the study guide helps us to see: that there is no irreconcilable opposition, but rather a necessary complicity between interest and disinterest insofar as the latter is teachable. George Levine argues that the 'tendency toward the aesthetic likely is universal to human nature', in the sense that all human beings, in virtue of our shared biological or perhaps psychological characteristics, have the capacity to respond to certain features of the world around us by having experiences of a kind that we would term 'aesthetic' experiences. Crucially, however, 'its particular manifestations must be determinedly cultural. While it is possible, of course, to *learn* [...] to value the aesthetic of other cultures [...] the absorption is always problematic [...] and mixed'.¹³⁰ It is this

¹²⁷ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 24.

¹²⁸ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 134.

¹²⁹ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 134.

¹³⁰ George Levine, 'Saving Disinterest: Aesthetics, Contingency, and Mixed Conditions', *New Literary History* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 922.

necessary cultural context that renders problematic traditional notions of the ‘purity’ of aesthetic experience; but the key to saving some notion of disinterest is precisely to extricate it from this ‘purity’ that renders mysterious how disinterest can be cultivated at all.

b) The deconstruction of the liberal humanist aesthetic: the contingency of disinterest

In Levine’s words, ‘a lot of babies went out with the bathwater, when along with “universality” and “essentialism” and “reality” itself, both “disinterest” and “objectivity” were being demystified’.¹³¹ Whilst those concepts have ‘no intrinsic political valence, neither progressive nor antiprogressive’,¹³² the ‘aesthetic has been so persistently deconstructed and demystified that valuing the beautiful and the way beautiful things are put together is now almost instinctively taken as ideologically suspect, and thus a fundamental element of human experience has been badly neglected’.¹³³ In closing chapter four, I referred to John Guillory’s negotiation of the relationship between aesthetic experience and the work of art as cultural capital, which seeks, similarly, to uphold the aesthetic. According to Guillory, aesthetic experience ‘need never exist in a “pure” form. It is in practice always combined with other practices’.¹³⁴ The ‘impurity’ of aesthetic experience, then, cannot be a reason to deny its *existence*. This logic is too often forgotten, holds Guillory, because the political critique of the aesthetic as reactionary poses ‘the “aesthetic” and the “political” as the discursive antithesis of current critical thought’, thus enjoining ‘a choice between them’.¹³⁵ The historical determination of aesthetic discourse leaves it vulnerable to ‘critique to the extent that it, like economic discourse or any discourse, is the vehicle of ideology, that is to say, an arena of social struggle’.¹³⁶ But this does not mean that the concept of the aesthetic cannot be distinguished from the particular discourses or contexts of any given manifestation, for example its liberal humanist conception: ‘The worst that can be said of traditional aesthetics is that its conflation of the aesthetic with the work of art *is* its ideology’.¹³⁷ So, as I argued in the previous chapter, ‘interested’ uses of art objects – such

¹³¹ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 907.

¹³² Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 907.

¹³³ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 909.

¹³⁴ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 327.

¹³⁵ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 273.

¹³⁶ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 282.

¹³⁷ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 336.

as that of the study guide, or of pedagogy more generally – *need not compromise* the value of aesthetic experience in itself.

The process of deconstructing and demystifying the aesthetic has, as Levine describes it, tended to revolve around ‘the aspect of the aesthetic that has always claimed to be outside of ideology, the realm of disinterest’.¹³⁸ In the study guide, it is this claim to a *pure* and *objective* disinterest which refuses reconciliation with instrumental pedagogy. In seeking to resolve this tension by demystifying the liberal humanist conception of disinterest, much re-evaluation of aesthetic concepts, like the theory-paradigm of *York Notes Advanced*, throws the baby out with the bathwater. Because it fails to locate the problem with the traditional conception of disinterest in its claim to purity and objectivity, *York Notes Advanced* targets not just liberal humanist elitism, but any conception of the aesthetic as, in Levine’s words, ‘distinctly different from those worldly actions that constitute the practical texture of our lives’.¹³⁹ This misapprehension opens the door to rational instrumentality. Aided by Levine and Guillory, however, we can conceive of a mixed, or contingent, conception of disinterest – one which is compatible with the purposes of the political left in a project of resistance, within pedagogy, against rationalising and neoliberal interests, by functioning as a critical element in the public sphere. Thus relieved of its obligations towards purity and objectivity, the notion of contingent disinterest in aesthetic appreciation can help create ‘a public, communal space in which the deepest values of the culture are recognized as more than private – precisely the condition that allows for a release from self-interest’.¹⁴⁰ Disinterest can be ‘reimagined as a space where interests are allowed to come into play with reduced consequences and reduced effect, generating feelings, articulating desires, expressing and exploring the values of the culture at large’.¹⁴¹ Not only can this ‘impure’ conception of disinterest be used to rethink the social mission in terms of a less ideologically suspect pedagogy, but such a conception, always contingent upon several different contexts, could provide a healthy counterweight to the reductive, and blinkered, influence of neoliberal instrumentality upon education. Thus reconceptualised, disinterest provides a space for imaginative aesthetic responses which – unlike the privileging of memorisation techniques – removes some of the demand for supposed ‘correct’ answers. This renewed attention to literary reading as a relatively ‘free’ form of the play of the imagination also empowers students with a critical perspective upon the neoliberal responsabilisation that

¹³⁸ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 910.

¹³⁹ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 926.

¹⁴⁰ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 927.

¹⁴¹ Levine, ‘Saving Disinterest’, 928.

urges them to approach literary reading in terms of calculated rationalising predictions about assessment.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown, through its analysis of study guide materials from two different time periods – 1951-1965 and 1990-2000 – how the balance between the instrumental and humanist impulses governing the genre has shifted in favour of instrumentality, and how this internal struggle has played out most visibly in the study guide's treatment of plot. In the early *Notes on Chosen English Texts* on Keats from 1958, with its strong loyalties to the liberal humanist aesthetic and emphasis upon a *pure* disinterest, the tension was pronounced. The study guide series of 1990-2000, influenced by developments in educational policy in that period and the time immediately preceding it, participate in a suppression of the liberal humanist aesthetic and a promotion of more strategic thinking in three different ways: *Teach Yourself Literature* in its rampant endorsement of the neoliberal ethos; *Brodie's Notes* through its editing and removal of unfashionable disciplinary ideas; and *York Notes Advanced* in its redefinition of the study guide's working assumptions in line with anti-humanist theory and criticism. The story of the study guide, I have sought to show, teaches us that because the concept of disinterest is not intrinsically political, it can be rescued from ideological suspicion through redefinition as an always contingent, and 'impure', component of aesthetic experience. Individualism and instrumentalism are perhaps too much a part of the study guide's rationale for the genre itself to support such a reconceptualisation of disinterest. Nevertheless, regarded as symptomatic of a malaise in literary education at large, the literature study guide shows us the need for such a concept of disinterest to counter instrumental thinking in education and to promote the role of literature as a communal space for reflection on non-utilitarian values.

Hopes for the Future: a Conclusion

Over the course of the preceding pages, the study guide has been the (perhaps at first sight unlikely) protagonist of a narrative about an anxiety central to the discipline of English literature. This anxiety pertains to the nature of literary study and the codification of critical engagement with literary artworks. The close attention paid, in this thesis, to the study guide's dual and discordant internal discourses foregrounds its participation in an instrumentalism which has now been encroaching upon education for several decades, affecting both its perceived purpose and its practice. Moreover, the discussion also brings to the fore the study guide's less immediately obvious, but firmly anchored, participation in discipline formation and the founding ideas of English as we know it today. The study guide's involvement in the politically motivated aim of Arnold's social mission means that it participates, not just in the instrumentalism of the neoliberal ethos; it also participates in *another* form of utility that accompanies that mission – one that is pedagogical, aesthetic, and anxious about its own compromise of the disinterested ideal. The realisation that the study guide was always in some respect informed by a disciplinary instrumentalism allows us to improve our understanding of how the guide in its liberal humanist form, and the discipline itself, was always susceptible to more pronounced forms of instrumentalism, such as that of neoliberal ideology.

In truth, the instrumentally motivated 'exam function' which the study guide comes to adopt is a perfectly coherent solution to the fraught tension within the Arnoldian ideal. When the study guide takes on its more openly commercialised form, the inconsistencies that follow from its liberal humanist aesthetic pedagogy become – as chapters one, two and five have illustrated – much more indirect, and ultimately irrelevant to its instrumental function. The study guide's separate function as a manual for taste within the specific context of English literary studies, however, represents an ambivalent response to Arnold's transmission problem. Within that problem, as we have seen, democratisation must not become so pragmatic that its aesthetic, and hence also social, value is lost – but at the same time, the sanctity of the pure aesthetic must not become more valuable than democratisation itself. This dilemma, which the study guide shares with much of the pedagogy of liberal humanist aesthetics, greatly affects its role within the wider disciplinary context of English literary studies. Indeed, since its earliest inception the study guide has been met by professional teachers and critics with a certain discomfort stemming from the problem of reconciling culture's 'inward condition' with its social and educational functions. The general nature of this problem within the pedagogy of English testifies to the depth of this

particular disciplinary anxiety: the tension between wanting to respect the aesthetic value of the literary artwork and the wish to make this value broadly attainable.

The particular problem at stake here is one of compromising an aesthetic ideal which might seem to be already outdated and outmoded. And for that very reason, liberal humanist aesthetics comes to be outrivalled, in the 1990s study guide, by critical approaches which seek to deconstruct politically suspect universalist concepts such as disinterest. But, as described in chapter five, the study guide's disconnection from the social mission project out of which it initially sprung leads, inadvertently, to lowered defences against neoliberal instrumentalism. This situation echoes Readings's 'ruining' of the university – a decline which was signalled by the deterioration of the status of literary culture as an agent of democracy and the nation state. For reasons given throughout this thesis, and particularly in chapter four, the ideal of disinterest is rightfully outmoded due to its socially exclusive ramifications. Nonetheless, the concept remains of continued relevance. This is because the interest/disinterest-dilemma, despite the concept of disinterest having been devalued, still tends to come to expression when critics seek to defend the core values of their discipline against economic pressures.

Connecting the prose and the passion

The continued centrality of the disciplinary anxiety for English literary studies, as for the humanities at large, is evidenced by the typically defensive character of responses within the humanities debate to the pressures of instrumentalism in higher education. Such responses often recall the rhetoric of Arnold's social mission: here, the value of humanities disciplines tends to be viewed as disinterested, or at the very least unbiased by instrumental concerns, but invariably, nonetheless, as *useful* at the levels of the personal and the social.¹ As Small writes, 'the arguments going on today about the value of the humanities have deep roots in the efforts of many of the best-remembered Victorian writers to articulate, for their period, the value of a "liberal" education and culture'. And whilst the roots of some of these

¹ The debate about the economic, social, and public value(s) of the humanities is currently taking place in a wide range of media from academic journals to Twitter, and is much too extensive to be comprehensively reviewed here. A useful and succinct list of widely held beliefs about the humanities (in the American context) is offered by Butler: 'the humanities have intrinsic value; the humanities are useless, and that is their value; public intellectuals exemplify the value of the humanities for public life; the humanities offer certain kinds of skill development that are important for economic mobility; the humanities offer certain kinds of literacy that are indispensable to citizenship; and finally, the humanities offer a critical perspective on values that can actively engage the contemporary metrics of value by which the humanities themselves are weakened, if not destroyed' (Judith Butler, 'Ordinary, Incredulous', in *The Humanities and Public Life*, ed. Peter Brooks with Hilary Jewett [New York: Fordham University Press, 2014], 27). For a comprehensive account of the most widely used arguments on behalf of the humanities (focusing on both British and American debates), see Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

arguments predate the nineteenth century, the ‘Victorian period retains explanatory importance because it is then that one sees emerging the now familiar pressure to justify expenditure on educating students in the humanities in the face of resistance from many political economists’.² Hence, a defensive political stance is built into this type of argument. Moreover, as my discussion has argued, this defensiveness, which turns on the incompatibility of the two opposing humanist and instrumentalist ways of valuing, represents an intensification of a tension already inherent in English as a teaching discipline.

Indeed, this thesis has shown that the study guide genre is born out of the sort of Victorian concerns described above. Those concerns, moreover, played a crucial part in the genre’s subsequent development, both in terms of how it frames the discipline’s own worries about pedagogical codification, and of the genre’s relationship to external educational policy. Being thus firmly rooted in Arnold’s social mission, the study guide has been an agent of a hugely influential tradition which seeks to ground the value of literary study in its social effects as part of a defensive reaction to claims about the ‘intangible’ and ‘useless’ character of the discipline and its purpose. The adherent identity conflict of the social mission tradition is strongly present in the study guide genre. Here, great unease is felt about – to borrow a phrase from E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* – connecting ‘the prose and the passion’.³ As an especially evocative expression of this anxiety, the study guide testifies to the continued relevance of the interest/disinterest dilemma within English literary studies despite the revisionist nature of criticism within the discipline. In other words, the study guide shows us that, within the institution of English, the prose and the passion have – by necessity – always already been connected, albeit in complex and troubled ways.

In fact, the defensive character of the presently ongoing discussions about the value of the humanities constitutes one expression of worries about this connection. Here, the difficulty of *separating* the prose from the passion means that the topical question of *funding* has come, as argued by Collini, to dominate and monopolise discussions about the discipline’s *value*.⁴ As indicated in chapter five, however, it is my hope that a reimagined – and impure – notion of disinterest might help abate some of the difficulties that follow from overly polarised notions of utility and the value of literary study.

² Small, *Value of the Humanities*, 7.

³ E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000), 188.

⁴ Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 197.

An 'impure' pedagogy

The study guide's participation in the cluster of problems discussed in the preceding chapters – literature and codification; class privilege and democratisation; the commodification of literary education – affords us a valuable insight into the challenges with which literary pedagogy is currently faced. As I have argued, the participation of pedagogy in both interest and disinterest provides a key to exposing the overly polarised nature of the relationship between these two tendencies: for insofar as disinterest is teachable, it cannot be opposed to the interested process of pedagogy, but must, rather, be somehow complicit with that process. Thus, in literary education, disinterest cannot be taken to imply an idealised and pure 'free play of the mind', but might more reasonably be taken to refer to some relative and 'impure' freedom, within the student's encounter with the literary text, from the tightness and pressure of the neoliberal duty towards self-entrepreneurship. It is hoped that English, in this way, can continue to offer what Knights has described as 'a space for students who precisely do not identify with the entrepreneurial, CV society, or whole-heartedly embrace an instrumentalized vision of their own future'.⁵

This vision of English is, of course, only feasible insofar as the discipline seeks to be socially inclusive and aware of its own limitations, abandoning any notions that such a space should be reserved for an elite few. As Knights writes, literary pedagogy seems still to a large extent to be 'built upon a paradigm of initiation and shedding of the impure identity'.⁶ Thus, the lingering fear of the *useful* side to the pedagogical codification of literature should be abandoned, such that manuals for taste are no longer felt to be needed for the penetration of an exclusive subject community. The need for such manuals, after all, has been occasioned by the evasion, within institutionalised teaching, of any concerted direct address to the issues of socialisation into taste. I agree with Knights that 'development in the humanities subjects must take place simultaneously in the domains of scholarship and teaching or risk the sterility of sectarian purity'.⁷ In its capacity as manual for taste, the study guide testifies to

⁵ Ben Knights, 'English on Its Borders', in *English Studies: The State of the Discipline, Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Niall Gildea, Helena Goodwyn, Megan Kitching and Helen Tyson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 21.

⁶ Ben Knights, 'Intelligence and Interrogation: The identity of the English student', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* no. 4, 33 (2005): 48. The use of the words 'purity' and 'impurity' here, as in the citation from Butler below (see footnote 10), resonates with my own description of the *pure* disinterested aesthetic which has traditionally played a central role within the discipline and its pedagogy. The notion of purity is no doubt used, in both Knights and Butler, with slightly different meanings to mine. However, the prevalence of the notion in both accounts testify to the sense, within the discipline, that literary uses and values are either *pure* or *impure*.

⁷ Knights, 'Intelligence and Interrogation', 48.

the impossibility of an autonomous aesthetic stance as well as to the inherent social bias of such an ideal. The lingering, and ill-advised, social exclusivity of English, indeed, motivates Graff to seek to open up what I (following Baldick) have referred to as its ‘trade secrets’ by ‘teaching the conflicts’.⁸ This thesis emphasises that the relationship between criticism and pedagogy is of crucial – but underestimated – importance for the future of the discipline.

In proposing that we seek to make the discipline’s implicit assumptions explicit in pedagogy, however, I do not mean to suggest that we should follow the example of the study guide, and risk exaggerating pedagogical codification at the expense of the discipline’s inherent anti-instrumentalism. Rather, it is my view that the foregrounding of the ‘disciplinary anxiety’ in the teaching of English is of central importance – for if we understand the discipline’s internal challenges and tensions, we are better placed to begin to understand its complex identity. It is hoped that, in the future, an increased focus on this and other internal disciplinary conflicts will lead to a fortified sense of what it means *to do English* – and that those particular conflicts will not continue to complicate or obfuscate our defences against the pressures of instrumentalism.

An ‘impure’ English

As we have seen, the decline of the disinterested ideal within the study guide opened the door to increased levels of instrumental rationality; and I have argued that the story of the study guide mirrors the discipline at large and the challenges it faces. In response, renewed attention to the concept of disinterest can be helpful in finding ways to tackle both the discipline’s internal problems and the external pressures upon it. Hence, an ‘impure’ aesthetic can be used in battling what Docherty describes as the replacement of judgement and critical knowledge ‘with a set of practices and beliefs that seek to prioritize the efficient and controlled *management of information*’.⁹ But, as in the case of pedagogy, where a balance needs to be struck between codification and a looser conception of disinterest in which inclusive ‘play’ is more important than examination results, defences of the discipline against neoliberalisation also need to find more productive uses of the old-fashioned social mission values to which it has become customary to return. Butler writes: ‘we must retrieve from the threat of oblivion those ways of valuing that can put into perspective the closing of

⁸ See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007); *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993).

⁹ Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 127.

the horizons enacted by the metrics we are asked to use,' or concede to a situation 'where the calculus emerges as the final arbiter of value, which means that the values we have to defend are already lost'. However – and this is the crucial point – she insists that this 'does not mean that we become conservative, endeavouring to reinstate a former time; rather, we must move forward in new ways, through new idioms, and with some impurity, to reanimate the very ideals that guide and justify our work'.¹⁰ A reconceptualised notion of disinterest, which remains anti-instrumental, but which is, at the same time, unafraid of its own practical and political utility, could be one way of reanimating those ideals – even in the hostile environment of a public sphere dominated by individualism and instrumentalism.

*

These hopes for the future of the discipline have been enabled by an investigation of the development of the genre of the literature study guide. Indirectly – and unexpectedly given its limited value as manual for taste or as pedagogic tool – the study guide has taught us something that is of central importance to English literary studies. It teaches us that the interest/disinterest-problem is historically deep-seated, and that the complex history of this tension holds relevance for current debates about the clash between literary values and instrumentalism.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, 'Ordinary, Incredulous', 33.

APPENDIX

Set of study guides used in this research, organised by series and date

Brodie's Notes

Carrington, Norman T., ed. *John Bunyan: Pilgrims Progress, Pt. I*. Brodie's Chosen English Texts. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1937.

Ikin, Alfred E., ed. *Milton: Paradise Lost Book I*. Brodie's Chosen English Texts. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1937.

Smith, T.W. *Shakespeare: The Tempest*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, [1941].

Goad, Kathleen M. *Thomas Hardy: The Trumpet-Major*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1951.

Turner, J.B.E. *Notes on Jane Austen: Mansfield Park*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1952.

Carrington, Norman T. *Notes on Shakespeare: Hamlet*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1954.

Carrington, Norman T. *John Keats: Longer Poems and Odes*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1958.

Carrington, Norman T. *Notes on Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1958.

Carrington, Norman T. *Thomas Hardy: Under the Greenwood Tree*. Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: James Brodie Ltd, 1959.

Carrington, Norman T. *Notes on Thomas Hardy: The Woodlanders*. Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. Bath: James Brodie Ltd, [1959].

- Carrington, Norman T. *Notes on Bronte (E): Wuthering Heights*. Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts. London: James Brodie Ltd, [1961].
- Baker, I.L. *Notes on Hardy: Far From the Madding Crowd*. Brodie's Notes on Chosen English Texts, edited by Norman T. Carrington. Bath: James Brodie Ltd, 1964.
- Carrington, Norman T. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Pan Study Aids. London: Pan Books, 1966.
- Baker, I.L. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*. Pan Study Aids/Brodie's Notes. London: Pan Books, 1976.
- Carrington, Norman T. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Hardy*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Study Aids, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: Pan Books 1976.
- Carrington, Norman T. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Study Aids. London: Pan Books, 1976.
- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Brodie's Notes / Pan Study Aids, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1976.
- Hardacre, Kenneth. *Brodie's Notes on Laurie Lee's Cider With Rosie*. London: Pan Books, 1976.
- Baker, I.L. *Hardy: Jude the Obscure*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Revision Aids, edited by Norman T. Carrington. London: Pan Educational, 1977.
- Goad, Kathleen. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's The Trumpet-Major*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Revision Aids. London: Pan Books, 1977.
- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Study Aids. London: Pan Books, 1978.
- Wilkinson, Ray. *Brodie's Notes on E.M. Forster's Howards End*. Brodie's Notes/Pan Study Aids. London: Pan Books, 1979.

- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Chosen Poems of Thomas Hardy*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986.
- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Brodie's Notes / Pan Study Aids, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1986.
- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990.
- Scholar, David. *Romeo and Juliet: Shakespeare*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1990.
- Baker, I.L. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991.
- Baker, I.L. *Selected Poems and Letters of John Keats*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1991.
- Handley, Graham. *Brodie's Notes on Selected Poems and Letters of John Keats*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1991.
- Washington, Peter. *Brodie's Notes on William Shakespeare's Hamlet*. York Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Pan Books, 1991.
- Scholar, David. *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Macmillan, 1992.
- Wilkinson, Ray. *Brodie's Notes on E.M. Forster's Howards End*. Brodie's Notes, edited by Graham Handley. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993.

Monarch Notes

Ackerman, Robert. *Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Monarch Notes and Study Guides, edited by Stanley Cooperman, Charles Leavitt and Unicio J. Violi. New York: Thor Publications, 1964.

Dewsnap, Terence. *William Golding's Lord of the Flies*. Monarch Notes. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964.

Leavitt, Charles L. and Emily S. Leavitt. *Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native*. Monarch Notes. New York: Monarch Press, 1964.

Ranald, Ralph A. *Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure*. Monarch Notes. New York: Monarch Press, 1965.

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Ross, Angus. *Swift: Gullivers Travels*. Studies in English Literature, edited by David Daiches. London: Edward Arnold, 1968.

McLauchlan, Juliet. *Conrad: Nostromo*. Studies in English Literature, edited by David Daiches. London: Edward Arnold, 1969.

Whiteley, John S. *Golding: Lord of the Flies*. Studies in English Literature, edited by David Daiches. London: Edward Arnold, 1969.

Methuen Notes

Notes on Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream. Methuen's Study Aids. London: Methuen, 1966.

Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd. Methuen Study-Aid Series.
London: Methuen, 1968.

Notes on Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd. Methuen's Study-Aids. London: Methuen Educational, 1971.

Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd. Methuen Notes Study Aids / Study Aid Series. London: Methuen Educational, 1974.

Barnish, Valerie L. *Notes on Hardy's Jude the Obscure.* Methuen Study-Aids. London: Methuen Paperbacks, 1977.

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Notes on Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd. Methuen Notes Study Aids.
London: Methuen Paperbacks, 1978.

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Baker, I.L. *Far From the Madding Crowd: Notes.* Coles Notes. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1976.

Carew, T.P. *Mayor of Casterbridge: Notes.* Coles Notes. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1976.

Campbell, W. John. *Death of a Salesman: Notes.* Coles Notes. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1987.

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Byron, Glennis. *John Keats: Selected Poems*. York Notes Advanced, edited by Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares. Harlow: York Press, 1999.

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Cowley, Julian. *Jude the Obscure: Thomas Hardy*. York Notes Advanced, edited by Martin Gray and A.N. Jeffares. Harlow: Longman/York Press, 2001.

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Handley, Graham. *Silas Marner by George Eliot*. Macmillan Master Guides, edited by James Gibson. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.

Page, Norman. *Emma by Jane Austen*. Macmillan Master Guides, edited by James Gibson. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.

- Spear, Hilda D. *Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë*. Macmillan Master Guides, edited by James Gibson. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.
- Temblett-Wood, Colin. *Far From the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy*. Macmillan Master Guides, edited by James Gibson. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985.
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