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# The Discipline of Sympathy and the Limits of Omniscience in Nineteenth-Century Journalism

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## *Introduction*

From discussions of Mr. Spectator as the ‘father’ of surveillance technology to those of Charles Dickens’s ‘Shadow’, critical inquiry into the usefulness of Michel Foucault’s disciplinary paradigm for our understanding of literary journalism has focused primarily on fantasies of omniscience, how these relate to an evolving urban society and their projection into narrative technique. Investigations have centred on the manner in which these journalists have sought to present the world to their readers and render it more knowable, and how in doing so they have encouraged the internalisation of certain social norms. I want to suggest an alternative relation between Foucault’s disciplinary paradigm and narrative technique in literary journalism, one in which the journalism under scrutiny is not a simple reflection of the new structures of power and governance that Foucault delineates, but rather can be seen in living relation to these structures, both enacting and resisting their role in creating a more transparent, disciplined society. Acknowledging of course the significance of the idea of omniscience to these writers and the texts, my focus is rather on the frequent use of the more limited, first-person perspective and how this relates to the journalist’s role in a disciplinary society.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Saint-Amour notes that the omniscient fantasy amplifies ‘sight at the expense of touch, penetration at the expense of participation’, yet touch and participation are often as significant as sight in literary journalism.<sup>2</sup> Certainly feeling plays a large part. For many of the journalists that I will be looking at, feeling is the key mode for resisting a passive and

disciplinary spectatorship, and yet it is also the most significantly disciplinary aspect of their texts. What I will call 'emotional witnessing' is fundamental to these writers' journalistic mission, but it is a paradoxical enterprise: it pushes the reader and text beyond 'knowability' and yet in terms of the internalisation of normative standards and the creation of agents of self-discipline, the ultimate goal of Foucault's disciplinary society, it is more effective than omniscience could ever be. Key to this is the nature of sympathy, which as we will see, can be a double-edged sword in a journalistic context.

### *Foucault's Disciplinary Paradigm*

To begin with then, what is Foucault's disciplinary paradigm and how has it been related to literary culture and questions of narrative technique? In basic terms, Foucault's contention is that the eighteenth century witnessed a radical alteration in the dynamics of governance and power. Up until the eighteenth century, power had been enacted physically on the body, usually in a public manner. Over the course of the century this shifts:

[I]t is no longer the body, with the ritual play of excessive pains, spectacular brandings in the ritual of the public execution; it is the mind or rather a play of representations and signs circulating discreetly but necessarily and evidently in the minds of all.<sup>3</sup>

Power is exercised on the mind, and it is thus that disciplinary power emerges, as a system of control rather than punishment. Discipline regulates an individual's actions and through his actions his mind, by marshalling his experience of space and time and by subjecting him to constant observation. In essence, it 'trains' him and in doing so it is productive rather than repressive:

[Discipline] does not link forces together in order to reduce them; it seeks to bind them together in such a way as to multiply and use them. Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decompositions to the point of necessary and sufficient single units. It ‘trains’ the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements—small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than treating people as an undifferentiated mass then, ‘Discipline “makes” individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise’.<sup>5</sup> Their individualism is key to their training, which for discipline to have truly taken effect, must have become internalised. In a disciplinary society, the individual becomes self-monitoring, their training so entrenched that it is a part of them, the observation that they have been submitted to so much a part of their life that they act as though they were observed even when not. Observation, analysis, differentiation, individualisation and normalisation—these are the key components of disciplinary power, and of the institutions through which it works. Foremost of these for Foucault is the prison, but Foucault also references schools, hospitals, and factories, from which institutions disciplinary tactics spread outwards into wider society.

For literary historians this outward spread includes literary culture and particularly one of the nineteenth century’s dominant forms, the realist novel. Focusing on the use of omniscient narration in nineteenth-century British and American fiction, Foucault-inspired

critics such as Jonathan Arac, Audrey Jaffe and D. A. Miller have discussed the connection between the rise of new methods of social surveillance and the omniscient narrator that dominates the narration of Victorian fictional life.<sup>6</sup> Paying particular attention to public health, and the means of inspection and data collection used to fight the upsurge of infectious diseases caused by industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as the growth of the metropolitan police, these critics, like Foucault, have investigated how these surveillance methods extended beyond the specific arenas in which they were first deployed to society at large and specifically how the novel became a mode of surveillance and discipline, 'educating its readerships to internalize the panoptical gaze of the omniscient narrator and thereby become part of the a morally self-policing citizenry' and enacting 'a fantasy of knowledge, mobility and authority'.<sup>7</sup>

Though their focus is on the novel, they make it clear that in terms of narration and discipline, they see little to distinguish the novel from journalism. For D. A. Miller, Dickens's novels are only 'continuing (with only a considerable increase in cunning) the apologetics for the new forces of order that Dickens began as an essayist for *Household Words*'.<sup>8</sup> Arac writes of how 'imaginative writers and journalists joined politicians and those whom we now consider the founders of the social sciences in a common effort to comprehend the disturbances of their age and to organize them in a useful model'.<sup>9</sup> While Jaffe comments that 'a similar tension between presence and absence, or personality and impersonality, appears in the structure of the panopticon' as to that which can be seen in Dickens's early journalism.<sup>10</sup>

From the social-science perspective, although there is a tension between models of journalistic history based upon Habermas and those which look towards Foucault, it is generally accepted that

To the extent that the goal of journalism became, at least in part, to portray an increasingly populous and interdependent society to itself, it came to rely on strategies for tracking, describing and categorizing the populace—strategies related to the disciplinary drive for monitoring and the incitement to selfdisclosure.<sup>11</sup>

In truth, the portrayal of society to itself has always been an intrinsic part of the journalistic mission. The increase in the desire to render society knowable and transparent, however, arose with the concurrent realisation that with urbanisation, and population growth in general, it was increasingly unknowable. As Miller, Arac and Jaffe point to, the fantasy of absolute transparency or omniscience is one rooted in the genesis of the modern city—its architecture, social practices and everyday dynamics. Indeed, as Gilbert Caluya writes, ‘For Foucault, techniques of government directly correlate to the emergence of the problematic of population’.<sup>12</sup> The need to see and to pinpoint, to observe and categorise, is one that strengthened dramatically from the eighteenth century onwards—a need that has been seen to be answered in the detail of nineteenth-century realism and also the explosion of periodical literature during the same period, observing and recording society from every angle. This then is how Foucault has generally been related to the literary culture of the time and its narrative techniques.

Alongside this view, however, I would like to place another. I would like to suggest that this drive towards knowability is not the full or only story, at least not in relation to journalism. Within that strand of journalism that has been called ‘literary’, transparency and the mapping of society is not an unproblematic endeavour. Like Lieutenant Yolland in Brian Friel’s *Translations*, the great literary journalists question as they map, and like Yolland,

throw the occasional sentimental obstacle in the way, in his case retaining old, untranslatable designations, in theirs, obscuring instead of categorising.<sup>13</sup> Writers such as Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens and his protégés, Tom Wolfe and his New Journalist cohorts question the perspectives they adopt when bringing the world before their readers. They may fantasise about omniscience, Dickens in particular, but they write from a limited, individualised viewpoint—the street level, rather than the panopticon. Any detour into a bird’s eye view is soon queried. They eschew productivity in favour of idleness. They prefer digressive and circuitous narrative modes, and the point, when they come to it, if they come to it, is often buried under layers of irony. Meaning is frequently oblique and often uncertain. While vision plays a significant part in their self-identity as journalists, they also place emphasis on other senses, and beyond the physical senses, on the emotions. They do not simply record what they see, but their feelings and associations on witnessing what they see.

Philip Davis in his exploration of the function of sentimentality in Victorian prose calls the emotion the reader feels on being presented with a scene of suffering ‘a secular bearing of witness’.<sup>14</sup> Witnessing here goes beyond mere observation: it involves an obligation to remembrance and a sense that as a witness one takes upon oneself the suffering that one sees. The journalist feels and the reader is called upon to feel with the journalist, a participant in the scene rather than just an observer. For the journalists and his readers, ‘[t]he horrors are no longer numbers, generalizations, abstractions, but are felt from the inside’.<sup>15</sup> This is the aim of much literary journalism, particularly in the nineteenth century—it seeks to move beyond a statistical analysis of society as vaunted by the Utilitarianism of the day, and which throughout modern history has been the mainstay of newspaper journalism, and through touching the emotions of its readers, thwart the notion that understanding can be achieved through the disciplinary dissection and analysis of society. It also however seeks to

move beyond a statistical analysis of society and through touching the emotions of its readers make them participants in the scene—to move them to action. It is often times didactic in nature and as such is, in essence, disciplinary, as it seeks to train and control the minds of its readers.

This is not therefore a narrative of resistance in place of one of compliance, but rather one in which the texts under examination reveal writers aware of the complexities of their own role in society, and who simultaneously embrace and question that role, who may fantasise about omniscience but are less than certain about existing in a state of surveillance.

### *The Limits of Omniscience*

‘The newspaper is not a lamp lighted by a single hand,’ wrote Anthony Trollope in 1865, ‘but a sun placed in the heaven by an invisible creator’.<sup>16</sup> ‘Sir Oracle’ was a common term of mockery when papers sought to deride the perspective of their competitors. Benedict Anderson has connected the newspaper with the ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ of the nation—‘a complex gloss upon the word “meanwhile”’.<sup>17</sup> However, the newspaper does not maintain a horizontal relationship either with society or with its readership. From before Edmund Burke’s characterisation of the press as ‘the fourth estate’ in 1787, it cast itself as outside of events looking in, an objective overseer of society—whether that was the truth or not. Nor in the standard news report, which makes up the bulk of a daily publication, is the reader regarded on terms of equality, rather the reader is simply treated as a passive recipient of information. The gaze of the great national dailies is panoptic: ceaselessly watching from above.

Literary journalism’s home has never been the newspaper but rather the single-essay periodical, the review and the miscellany—publications that are partial, small-scale and in



some cases inherently dialogic. Nonetheless, for the journalists writing in these publications, omniscience remains a touchstone of the journalistic experience. The access to and knowledge of all walks of society that it represents is a fantasy revisited again and again by numerous writers. Scott Paul Gordon suggests that we view ‘Mr. Spectator as a “father” of surveillance technologies’.<sup>18</sup> John Hollingshead in ‘First-Floor Windows’ travels London on the top of an omnibus, looking in first-floor windows, and ‘[f]rom this position I have seen you’ he tells the reader, ‘I have watched you [...] I have gazed upon you’.<sup>19</sup> In brainstorming ideas for a new periodical, Charles Dickens wants ‘to suppose a certain Shadow, which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight, and be in all homes, and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be cognisant of everything, and go everywhere’.<sup>20</sup> Asmodeus, the devil with the gift of lifting the roofs off houses and showing the scenes that are being enacted within, is referenced by the author of ‘Asmodeus, or, Strictures on the Glasgow Democrats’ published in the *Glasgow Courier* in 1793, 1820s French periodical *Le Diable Boîteux*, and Edward Bulwer Lytton in his ‘Asmodeus at Large’ series in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1833. Tom Wolfe, in defining the ‘New Journalism’ of twentieth-century America, notes what struck him most on his first encounter with New Journalism—the journalist’s insight into matters that should be beyond his ken (‘I really didn’t understand how anyone could manage to do reporting on things like the personal byplay between a man and his fourth wife [...] *The bastards are making it up!*’).<sup>21</sup>

As Miller writes ‘omniscient narration assumes a fully panoptic view of the world it places under surveillance. Nothing worth knowing escapes its notation, and its complete knowledge includes the knowledge that it is always right’. Moreover, ‘there is no other perspective on the world than its own, because the world entirely coincides with that perspective’.<sup>22</sup> But despite the appeal of such complete knowledge and their recurring fantasies regarding it, literary journalists have time and again problematised the use of the

omniscient perspective so popular in the nineteenth-century novel and instead have celebrated the partial, limited view of the individual. Jaffe has characterised this tension between omniscience and the partial view in the work of Dickens as a conflict between ‘a desire for personal knowledge gained through sympathetic identification’ and ‘a desire for impersonal knowledge acquired through surveillance’, but I would argue that to this battle of desires we must also add an anxiety regarding surveillance, which the desire for sympathetic identification is in some measure a reflection of.<sup>23</sup>

Writers such as William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb emphasise the individualism of their viewpoints as journalists. Lamb’s ‘Elia’ is self-consciously odd and deliberately places himself outwith society’s norms, celebrating his lack of comprehensiveness and the partiality of his view. As he writes in the essay ‘Imperfect Sympathies’, he has a mind ‘rather suggestive than comprehensive’ and makes ‘no pretences to much clearness and or precision’ but instead is ‘content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth’. He contrasts this with the mindset of the Caledonian, which he deplors: ‘The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistake) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply’.<sup>24</sup> ‘Panoply’ is just what Lamb avoids; rather his journalism is essayistic, built on ‘speculative, informal, impressionistic knowledge, or half-knowledge’.<sup>25</sup> As Marilyn Butler states ‘He makes no claims that could not have been tested within the scope of one man’s experience’.<sup>26</sup> One man’s experience, moreover, that is resistant to analysis or judgement and evades any attempts to pinpoint it. As Simon Hull remarks, Elia changes his birth place from one essay to another: ‘The games Elia plays with his own identity [...] are central to the reader’s education. A requirement for the reader to see beyond the material and the empirical is implicit in Elia’s reflexivity over his own phantasmal existence and the freedom from a fixed, oppressive notion of identity’.<sup>27</sup>

Hazlitt's essays are of quite a different style from those of Lamb but nonetheless speak to a 'restless, sceptical, self-tormenting and doubting [...] individualism'.<sup>28</sup> While his early efforts are subsumed in the editorial 'we' of Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, by the time we reach Hazlitt's most celebrated phase of essay writing for the *London Magazine* and the *New Monthly*, he is using the first-person pronoun with vigour. In 'On Gusto', he notes that there is more to art than visual acuity, and that simply recording accurately the visible often leaves something lacking:

Claude's landscapes, perfect as they are, want gusto. This is not easy to explain. They are perfect abstractions of the visible images of things; they speak the visible language of nature truly. They resemble a mirror or a microscope. To the eye only they are more perfect than any other landscapes that ever were or will be painted; they give more of nature, as cognizable by one sense alone; but they lay an equal stress on all visible impressions; they do not interpret one sense by another; they do not distinguish the character of different objects as we are taught, and can only be taught, to distinguish by their effect on the different senses. That is, his eye wanted imagination: it did not strongly sympathize with his other faculties. He saw the atmosphere, but he did not feel it.<sup>29</sup>

Feeling is more important than seeing for Hazlitt. The microscopic gaze is to no purpose without imagination or sympathy. 'I never saw any thing more terrific than his aspect just before he fell', he writes in 'The Fight', combining observation and his own individual feeling regarding his observation.<sup>30</sup>

Moving forward to the mid-nineteenth-century, while there are numerous examples of journalists indulging in omniscient fantasies, those fantasies rarely remain uncomplicated. Or, in the instance of Charles Collins's 'Our Eyewitness' articles in *All the Year Round*, punctured. Consider the language used in this preamble to one of his reports:

Our Eye-witness has spent the greater part of two days in a careful examination of the Royal Arsenal, at Woolwich.

Before proceeding to enter into any description of what he saw on the occasion of this visit, the writer wishes to record here his sense of the obligation he is under to Colonel Tulloh, and the other officers and gentlemen engaged in the superintendence of the different departments, for their readiness to facilitate his examination of the place, and to afford him every assistance which lay in their power towards forming a correct idea of the resources of this splendid arsenal.<sup>31</sup>

Collins uses words such as 'examination', 'record', 'superintendence', 'department', and 'correct'—words which suggest or directly reference the three key elements of Foucault's disciplinary power: hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and examination. 'Our Eye-witness' is often reduced to his function of observation, as the titling of the series might suggest. In the series opener, he is described as 'simply an observant gentleman who goes about with his eyes and ears open, who notes everything that comes in his way'.<sup>32</sup> 'Notes everything' is an important phrase here.

Yet the Eye-witness's perspective is far from omniscient and in fact his pretensions to such a vantage point are often lampooned in the series. Instead his viewpoint is the limited viewpoint of the street. For example: 'There is always a certain interest attached to the private

life of great public characters; so your Eye-witness, who happened to be passing, stopped and joined the knot of spectators, thinking that he, too, would like to see this performer emerge from his lodgings'.<sup>33</sup> Here is no Asmodean ability to see through walls or view the interior of others' lives, but rather a man on the street, on tip-toes struggling to see through the crowd. A man with a name that suggests the very opposite of clarity and transparency: Mr. David Fudge. A name, furthermore, which may have invoked for contemporary readers Thomas Moore's epistolary verse novel, *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818), and their 'inane descriptions' of their travels.<sup>34</sup> But most importantly, a single man with a partial, subjective outlook, which renders Collins's rather laborious play with the second and third-person perspectives an exercise in unsubtle comedy and Our Eye-witness's occasional alignment of his role with that of 'officers and gentlemen' gently absurd.

Moreover, the subjectivism of Our Eye-witness's perspective not only gently ridicules any pretensions to hierarchical oversight but at the same time shows up the limitations of such a view. Of the Arsenal at Woolwich, a perfect example of the kind of disciplinary institution that Foucault discusses, Our Eye-witness remarks 'the healthy tone and activity pervading the whole place', only to comment that it is the result of 'a condition of affairs precisely the reverse'. Throughout the entire article, he is keen to contrast objective examination of industrial process with his imaginative sense that for all the healthy productivity on view, this is a place of 'destruction', 'cruelty', and 'carnage'.<sup>35</sup>

Collins's contemporary Thackeray also celebrates the individual perspective in his journalism. 'Linea recta brevissima' he writes in 'On Two Children in Black', 'That right line "I" is the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication between us, and stands for what it is worth and no more [...] and although these are Roundabout Papers, and may wander who knows whither, I shall ask leave to maintain the upright and simple

perpendicular'.<sup>36</sup> Thackeray as a journalist is circulatory ('wander[ing] who knows whither'), he is ironic in the true sense of the word, leaving meaning blurred and unresolved ('stands for what it is worth and no more'), and he is resolutely personal. As with Wolfe a century later, he flouts the notion of 'the pale beige tone' and instead exudes 'personality, energy, drive, bravura' or as Hazlitt would have it, 'gusto'.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, in 'On Letts's Diary', he does not simply celebrate the individual but critiques the alternative, contrasting the all-knowing narrative of the newspaper with its linear discipline with the partial, subjective narrative of his individual viewpoint. The newspaper account of Sir Richmond Shakespear's life and death, as Thackeray recounts it, is as follows:

'For thirty-two years,' the paper says, 'Sir Richmond Shakespear faithfully and devotedly served the Government of India, and during that period but once visited England, for a few months and on public duty. In his military capacity he saw much service, was present in eight general engagements, and was badly wounded in the last. In 1840, when a young lieutenant, he had the rare good fortune to be the means of rescuing from almost hopeless slavery in Khiva 416 subjects of the Emperor of Russia; and, but two years later, greatly contributed to the happy recovery of our own prisoners from a similar fate in Cabul. Throughout his career this officer was ever ready and zealous for the public service, and freely risked life and liberty in the discharge of his duties. Lord Canning, to mark his high sense of Sir Richmond Shakespear's public services, had lately offered him the Chief Commissionership of

Mysore, which he had accepted, and was about to undertake,  
when death terminated his career'.<sup>38</sup>

Compare this with Thackeray's own perspective on his cousin's life and death:

We were first-cousins; had been little playmates and friends  
from the time of our birth; and the first house in London to  
which I was taken, was that of our aunt, the mother of his  
Honor the Member of Council. His Honor was even then a  
gentleman of the long robe, being, in truth, a baby in arms. We  
Indian children were consigned to a school of which our  
deluded parents had heard a favorable report, but which was  
governed by a horrible little tyrant, who made our young lives  
so miserable that I remember kneeling by my little bed of a  
night, and saying, 'Pray God, I may dream of my mother!'  
Thence we went to a public school; and my cousin to  
Addiscombe and to India.<sup>39</sup>

In one, his cousin is a rescuer of slaves, in the other a slave to 'a horrible little tyrant'. In one account he is the discipliner, in the other the disciplined. More significantly, one is comprehensive, categorical and moralistic, positing Thackeray's cousin's life as a model of public duty, while the other is intimate and fragmented, focusing on a moment rather than the whole. It is clear from the manner in which he juxtaposes the accounts which Thackeray prefers and that for Thackeray, paradoxically, the comprehensive account needs the fragment to make it whole, for it is in the fragment that we find the emotional truth of Richmond Shakespear's death.

Similarly, despite his dreams of ‘Shadows’ and despite the two writers’ disagreements over the ‘dignity of literature’, the majority of Dickens’s journalism is also written from the perspective of the individual on or in the scene. Take for example the first paper in his ‘Uncommercial Traveller’ series:

The tide was on the flow, and had been for some two hours and a half; there was a slight obstruction in the sea within a few yards of my feet: as if the stump of a tree, with earth enough about it to keep it from lying horizontally on the water, had slipped a little from the land—and as I stood upon the beach and observed it dimpling the light swell that was coming in, I cast a stone over it.<sup>40</sup>

With phrases such as ‘a few yards from my feet’ Dickens quickly establishes his place in the scene. However, not only is he in the scene but he is interacting with it—‘I cast a stone over it’. He is a participant as well as an observer. Moreover, he also establishes the tenor of his observation through his contemplative focus on the movements of the water.

At times, like ‘Our Eye-witness’, he takes the position of the unknowing bystander. In ‘Some Recollections of Mortality’, he aligns himself with a crowd waiting outside the Paris Morgue:

Shut out in the muddy street, we now became quite ravenous to know all about it. Was it river, pistol, knife, love, gambling, robbery, hatred, how many stabs, how many bullets, fresh or decomposed, suicide or murder? All wedged together, and all staring at one another with our heads thrust forward, we propounded these inquiries and a hundred more such.<sup>41</sup>



At other times, he takes on the role of inspector, but never without introducing a note of discomfort. In 'A Small Star in the East', he brags about his abilities as an observer, 'I could take in all these things without appearing to notice them, and could even correct my inventory', and places himself in the role of impartial, all-seeing judge, only be discountenanced by the fact that 'A child stood looking on', noting that 'I could enter no other houses for that one while, for I could not bear the contemplation of the children'.<sup>42</sup>

Dickens is almost always both an observer and a participant in the scene. Jaffe argues that this is due to a desire for personal knowledge that competes with his desire for omniscience, resulting in the creation of narrators that she calls 'semi-omniscient'. But for Jaffe, 'Individual sympathy is encouraged but also evaded' in *Boz*, while later work in *Household Words* fails to 'personalize – to domesticate, as its title suggests – the vast machinery of the industrial age by presenting scientific and statistical information informally', which amounts to much the same thing. The very notion of investigation for Jaffe suggests a distance that works against sympathy.<sup>43</sup>

It seems evident, however, that the incitement of emotion, of going beyond the simply visible, of approaching his subjects with 'gusto', was Dickens's intent. In the introductory paper to the 'Uncommercial Traveller', he makes this purpose clear:

It was the kind and wholesome face I have made mention of as being then beside me, that I had purposed to myself to see, when I left home for Wales. I had heard of that clergyman, as having buried many scores of the shipwrecked people; of his having opened his house and heart to their agonised friends; of his having used a most sweet and patient diligence for weeks and weeks, in the performance of the forlornest offices that

Man can render to his kind; of his having most tenderly and thoroughly devoted himself to the dead, and to those who were sorrowing for the dead. I had said to myself, 'In the Christmas season of the year, I should like to see that man!'<sup>44</sup>

Having read in the newspaper of the shipwreck, he comes to see it himself in order to witness it emotionally and to provide an account that will view the scene through the lens of feeling, and which will note sorrow and tenderness and 'sweet and patient diligence'.

### *The Discipline of Sympathy*

Hunter S. Thompson is jauntily defiant when he proclaims that

When a jackrabbit gets addicted to road-running, it is only a matter of time before he gets smashed—and when a journalist turns into a politics junkie he will sooner or later start raving and babbling in print about things that only a person who has Been There can possibly understand.<sup>45</sup>

For Thompson this comes down to a choice between providing a 'cinematic reel-record of what the campaign was like *at the time*' or giving his readers 'what the whole thing boiled down to or how it fits into history'.<sup>46</sup> Those of us who were not there may never be able to fully comprehend his prose but his opaque rendering of the scene is the closest we can get to the experience of it, to an understanding that goes beyond outcomes and consequences and 'the whole thing boiled down'. In other words, it is the closest we will come to the *feeling* of it and the kind of knowledge that accompanies sensation, participation and the street-level view.

Thompson and the other twentieth-century New Journalists are in themselves a worthy case study for looking at the relationship between journalism and the disciplinary gaze, but they differ in significant ways from the nineteenth-century journalists discussed in this article. First, they actually enact their fantasies of omniscience in their journalism. Second, while feeling is key with both, the relationship between feeling and judgement in their works is less clear—just who is being disciplined and how is a much murkier subject than with, for example, Hazlitt, who in ‘The Fight’ openly proclaims the target of his discourse. ‘Ladies!’, he writes, ‘it is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues, and may they never look cold and askance on one another!’<sup>47</sup> The adoption of the individual perspective is, for the journalists examined here, not simply a matter of aesthetics, but rather of morality. Lamb in eschewing the all-inclusive vision of the ‘Caledonian’ states:

Between the affirmative and the negative there is no borderland with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him—for he sets you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong.<sup>48</sup>

The Caledonian mindset is the result of a flawed morality, the rigidity and starkness of which Lamb objects to. Lamb’s writing instead wanders and hesitates, revelling not just in halftruths but untruths, in the murky ground between right and wrong. The idea of human beings living in ‘perfect sympathy’ with each other is, for Lamb, fantastical, but what sympathy we can

garner for our fellows can only live outside of the all-encompassing severity of the Caledonian.

Similarly, John Hollingshead writes of viewing the city from above:

[F]rom such a place, the roar, the accumulated voice of the great city—lifted up in its joy, its labour, its sorrow, its vice, and its suffering—sounds as the sharp cry of agony issuing from the mouths of men who are chained, within the hateful bounds, by imaginary wants and artificial desires; yet it fills the heart with no more sense of pity than the united plaint of lowsighing pain coming from the wretched flies on yonder besmeared fly-catcher.<sup>49</sup>

As Richard Maxwell notes, omniscience and human feeling are hard to reconcile and feeling was important to nineteenth-century writers.<sup>50</sup> Hazlitt's opinion on the subject of feeling and art we have already seen in relations to his comments on 'gusto' and Hollingshead's are made evident in the passage quoted above. 'That fusion of the graces of imagination to the realities of life' was the driving thrust of Dickens's magazines *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.<sup>51</sup> In making his case for his preference for writers such as Michel de Montaigne and James B. Howel, Thackeray writes that it is because of the emotional truth of their individualism.

I hope I shall always like to hear men, in reason, talk about themselves. What subject does a man know better? If I stamp on a friend's corn, his outcry is genuine—he confounds my clumsiness in the accents of truth. He is speaking about himself

and expressing his emotion of grief or pain in a manner perfectly authentic and veracious.<sup>52</sup>

Individualism's value is in the authenticity of the emotion it communicates. There is no truth without feeling. Moreover, feeling, alongside irony and digression, is a way of resisting the disciplinary nature of industrial society and the shift towards transparency and knowability that Lamb scorns in 'Imperfect Sympathies' and that Dickens shudders from in 'A Fly-Leaf in a Life'.<sup>53</sup>

However, feeling and its corollary sympathy, and their employment in literature, are in themselves deeply disciplinary. As Fonna Forman-Barzilai notes, traditional theories of sympathy resonate deeply with Foucault's description of socially-disciplined norms and disciplinary power.<sup>54</sup> Adam Smith's account, being the premier example, tells of two people, a spectator and an agent. The spectator observes the agent, and imagines her/himself in the same situation and what s/he would feel in that situation. He holds that in the process of sympathising with another person, 'we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him'.<sup>55</sup> Smith goes on to discuss how the agent internalises the spectator, imagining the gaze of others upon her/him even when there is no one there to observe the agent's actions and how the agent modifies her/his behaviour accordingly. Sympathy can thus be seen as a two-part 'dramatic social practice', the second stage of which is discipline, or 'the impact that the spectator's surveillance and judgement have upon the agent, the extent to which they motivate him to modify his conduct, and ultimately, through repetition, become a member of a moral culture'.<sup>56</sup> By encouraging their readers to practice a sympathetic outlook on the world then, these journalists are encouraging them to turn the disciplinary gaze inwards, to imagine someone always watching and judging their conduct.

They are encouraging the normalisation that their individual stance and their cultivation of eccentricity would seem to reject.

For example, let us return to Thackeray's article on his cousin's death. Here is how he concludes the piece:

I write down his name in my little book, among those of others  
dearly loved, who, too, have been summoned hence. And so we  
meet and part; we struggle and succeed; or we fail and drop  
unknown on the way. As we leave the fond mother's knee, the  
rough trials of childhood and boyhood begin; and then  
manhood is upon us, and the battle of life, with its chances,  
perils, wounds, defeats, distinctions. And Fort William guns are  
saluting in one man's honor, while the troops are firing the last  
volleys over the other's grave—over the grave of the brave, the  
gentle, the faithful Christian soldier.<sup>57</sup>

After mocking the narrative of public duty and heroics that the newspaper spun about his cousin—'His Honor was even then a gentleman of the long robe, being, in truth, a baby in arms'—Thackeray constructs his own narrative with its own moral message, which in fact, does not stray that far from the original, praising almost the same characteristics as the other narrative of his death. Thackeray's tale however is an emotional one, resonant with private grief. It attempts to play on the reader's sympathy and thus involves the reader in a process of imagination, judgement and internalisation of norms.

Or, let us look once again at Hazlitt's 'The Fight'. As David Higgins has shown, there was much journalistic attention paid to prize fighting in the 1820s. Hazlitt's editor pictured the article as 'a depiction of "existing manners"'. Soon to become a mere record of our past

barbarities'.<sup>58</sup> Hazlitt however sought to make his readership sympathise with the fighters, to make them turn back their judgemental gaze on themselves and finding themselves wanting.

All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him.

His face was like a human skull, a death's head, spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood [...] Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, [...] it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his sense forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over. Yet whose despise the FANCY, do something to shew as much *pluck*, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!<sup>59</sup>

Here Hazlitt marks the purpose of his description quite clearly. He engages the reader in the scene and in the fighter's situation through visceral physical descriptions that play upon the emotions in order that he might then turn any potential judgement round upon the reader. He makes the reader pity the man and then turns that back on the reader. If you pity him, what does that suggest about you? Sympathy becomes a disciplinary process.

### *Conclusion*

Mark Andrejevic writes 'What takes place in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century mass society, according to such an account, is not the op-down silencing of the masses, but the probing, observation, and

measurement of the citizenry'. Further, '[t]he rise of the so-called objective journalism, to the extent that it shies away from what it construes as setting or shaping the "agenda" and turns instead to the pseudo-social science of polling-based horse race coverage, facilitates this process'.<sup>60</sup> But can we say anything different of 'subjective' journalism? Does it not similarly map the citizenry? Is this a paradox similar to that posed by Gayatri Spivak when she talks of the subaltern?<sup>61</sup> Perhaps just as Western academic approaches to the 'third world' are inescapably colonial, so also, by its nature, journalism is necessarily disciplinary. Even at its most subjective, contained firmly within the limits of the individual perspective, and focused upon the least quantifiable of factors, is its mission not to probe society? Even at its most ironic, does it not seek to make something more visible to its readers? It may conceal, as Steiner suggests, but it also communicates.<sup>62</sup> It cannot completely resist transparency, nor even seek to.

<sup>1</sup> If space allowed, the manner in which these texts often work against transparency through irony, digressive narrative patterns and obfuscation, as well as how they problematise vision and perspective and the relationship between observer and observed, is of equal interest and well worth exploring.

<sup>2</sup> Paul K. Saint-Amour, 'The Vertical Flâneur: Narratorial Tradecraft in the Colonial Metropolis' in *Joyce, Benjamin and Magical Urbanism*, ed. Maurizia Boscagli and Enda Duffy, *European Joyce Studies* 21 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), 229.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 101.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Arac, *Commissioned Spirits: The Shaping of Social Motion in Dickens, Carlyle, Melville and Hawthorne* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1979); Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).



- <sup>7</sup> Saint-Amour, 'The Vertical Flâneur', 231; Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 12.
- <sup>8</sup> Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 94.
- <sup>9</sup> Arac, *Commissioned Spirits*, 13-14.
- <sup>10</sup> Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 11.
- <sup>11</sup> Mark Andrejevic, 'Theory Review: Power, Knowledge and Governance: Foucault's Relevance to Journalism Studies', *Journalism Studies* 9, 4 (2008), 609.
- <sup>12</sup> Gilbert Caluya, 'The Post-Panoptic Society? Reassessing Foucault in Surveillance Studies', *Social Identities* 16, 5 (Sept 2010), 631.
- <sup>13</sup> Brian Friel, *Translations* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), II. 1., 38-67.
- <sup>14</sup> Philip Davis, 'Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality' in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, ed. Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 16.
- <sup>15</sup> Ann Berlak, 'Teaching and Testimony: Witnessing and Bearing Witness to Racisms in Culturally Diverse Classrooms', *Curriculum Inquiry* 29, 1 (Spring 1999), 106.
- <sup>16</sup> Anthony Trollope, 'On Anonymous Literature', *Fortnightly Review* (1 July 1865), 493.
- <sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1991), 7, 25.

- <sup>18</sup> Scott Paul Gordon, 'Voyeuristic Dreams: Mr. Spectator and the Power of Spectacle', *The Eighteenth Century* 36, 1 (1995), 3.
- <sup>19</sup> John Hollingshead, 'First-floor Windows', *All the Year Round* (30 July 1859), 326.
- <sup>20</sup> John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), 2:450.
- <sup>21</sup> Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (London: Picador, 1996 [1975]), 24.
- <sup>22</sup> Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 23-24.
- <sup>23</sup> Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 16.
- <sup>24</sup> Charles Lamb, 'Imperfect Sympathies' in *Elia & The Last Essays of Elia*, ed. Jonathan Bates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 68.
- <sup>25</sup> David Duff, 'Charles Lamb's Art of Intimation', *Wordsworth Circle* 43,3 (Summer 2012), 133.
- <sup>26</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 177.
- <sup>27</sup> Simon P. Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), 15.
- <sup>28</sup> Butler, *Romantics*, 173.
- <sup>29</sup> William Hazlitt, 'On Gusto' in *The Fight and Other Writings*, ed. Tom Paulin and David Chandler (London and New York: Penguin, 2000), 79.
- <sup>30</sup> Hazlitt, 'The Fight', in *The Fight and Other Writings*, 152.
- <sup>31</sup> Charles Collins, 'Our Eye-witness at Woolwich', *All the Year Round* (13 August 1859), 365.
- <sup>32</sup> Charles Collins, 'Our Eye-witness', *All the Year Round* (25 June 1859), 203.
- <sup>33</sup> Charles Collins, 'Our Eye-witness and the Performing Bull', *All the Year Round* (24 December 1859), 199. <sup>34</sup>  
'Fudge Family in Paris, The' in *The Concise Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble, Jenny Stringer and Daniel Hahn, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 268.
- <sup>35</sup> Collins, 'Our Eye-witness at Woolwich', 373, 366.
- <sup>36</sup> W. M. Thackeray, 'Roundabout Papers.—No. II. On Two Children in Black', *Cornhill Magazine* (March 1860), 381.
- <sup>37</sup> Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 31.
- <sup>38</sup> W. M. Thackeray, 'Roundabout Papers.—No. XVIII. On Letts's Diary', *Cornhill Magazine* (January 1862), 127.
- <sup>39</sup> Thackeray, 'On Letts's Diary', 127.

- <sup>40</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Uncommercial Traveller.—The Shipwreck', *All the Year Round* (28 January 1860), 321.
- <sup>41</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Uncommercial Traveller.—Some Recollections of Mortality', *All the Year Round* (16 May 1863), 277.
- <sup>42</sup> Charles Dickens, 'New Uncommercial Samples.—A Small Star in the East', *All the Year Round* (19 December 1868), 64.
- <sup>43</sup> Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 10, 35.
- <sup>44</sup> Dickens, 'The Shipwreck', 322.
- <sup>45</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*, 13.
- <sup>46</sup> Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*, 17.
- <sup>47</sup> Hazlitt, 'The Fight', 140.
- <sup>48</sup> Lamb, 'Imperfect Sympathies', 69.
- <sup>49</sup> John Hollingshead, 'All Night on the Monument', *Household Words* (30 January 1858), 145.
- <sup>50</sup> Richard Maxwell, 'Dickens's Omniscience', *ELH* 46 (1979), 293
- <sup>51</sup> Charles Dickens, 'All the Year Round', *Household Words* (28 May 1859), 601.
- <sup>52</sup> Thackeray, 'On Two Children in Black', 380.
- <sup>53</sup> Dickens writes in 'A Fly-Leaf' 'It was specially observable that every prescriber, whether in a moral or physical direction, knew me thoroughly knew me from head to heel, in and out, through and through, upside down. I was a glass piece of general property, and everybody was on the most surprisingly intimate terms with me. A few public institutions had complimentary perceptions of corners in my mind, of which, after considerable self-examination, I have not discovered any indication', (*All the Year Round* [22 May 1869], 59091).
- <sup>54</sup> Fonna Forman-Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 64.
- <sup>55</sup> Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (1976), 1:2.
- <sup>56</sup> Forman-Barzilai, *Smith and the Circles of Sympathy*, 63.
- <sup>57</sup> Thackeray, 'On Letts's Diary', 128.
- <sup>58</sup> David Higgins, 'Englishness, Effeminacy, and the New Monthly Magazine: Hazlitt's 'The Fight',

*Romanticism* 10, 2 (2004), 179.

<sup>59</sup> Hazlitt, 'The Fight', 152-53.

<sup>60</sup> Mark Andrejevic, 'Foucault's Relevance to Journalism Studies', 609.

<sup>61</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Carl Nelson and L. Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 271-313.

<sup>62</sup> 'The element of privacy in language makes possible a crucial though little understood linguistic function. Its importance relates a study of translation to a theory of language as such. Obviously, we speak to communicate.

But also to conceal, to leave unspoken', George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 47.

## Annex: Acceptance Information

**From:** Maunder, Andrew <a.c.maunder@herts.ac.uk>

**Sent:** 09 June 2014 12:24

**To:** Hazel Mackenzie

**Subject:** RE: Critical Survey submission

**Attachments:** CS guidelines May\_20001\_Revised GH.doc

Dear Hazel

Sorry for the delay on this.

I've now heard back from our reader. It's very positive as you'll see.

To quote: "In short, it is excellent and certainly deserves to be published asap - I'll certainly be quoting and debating with it when it does. There are some typos but I guess these can be sorted those out. It's one of the best submissions to a journal (or collection) that I've read for some time (and I'm not just comparing it to undergraduate exams I assure you!).' I trust this reader implicitly so happy to go ahead if you are.

All we'd need are the following:

The article putting in House Style (attached)

An abstract

A contributor biography.

Let me know what you think when you have a moment.

Best wishes Andrew