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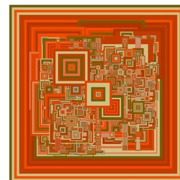

‘I will not die a monster’: The Transformation of the Human Body: its Portrayal, Interpretation and Storytelling in Contemporary Mainstream Anglo-American Cinema
Caleb Turner (*University of Kent*)

Chopping Down a Beanstalk? The (Un-)Uncanniness of Freud’s Concept of the Fairy Tale
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Punctuation Today: A Qualitative Study
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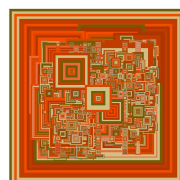

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Skepsi is an online research journal based in the School of European Culture and Languages at the University of Kent (SECL) and is entirely run by research students.

The aim of *Skepsi*'s editorial board is twofold: to honour the spirit of SECL by striving to take advantage of its unique position as a crossroads in academic studies in Europe and to become a forum for European postgraduate researchers and postdoctoral scholars by developing collective thinking processes in the context of academic research.

Our title, S*kepsi* — which comes from the Ancient Greek 'σκεφις [*skepsis*]' or 'enquiry' and the Modern Greek 'σχέφις [*sképsis*]' or 'thought' — symbolises our will to explore new areas and new methods in the traditional fields of academic research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Originality and creativity in the approach of thought and of texts are crucial for us: to enhance and to promote these aspects will be our contribution to the tremendous range of existing academic publications.

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On a personal note, the Editorial Board must offer a big thank you for their contribution to *Skepsi* to two of its members who have retired since the last issue, Kamilla Pawlikowska and Alvise Sforza Tarabochia both founder members. We wish them well in the future and welcome in their place Marco Piasentier, Guillaume Collett and Nina Rolland.

However, despite having retired from the Editorial Board, both Alvise Sforza Tarabochia and Fabien Arribert-Narce continue to assist *Skepsi* in the background, Fabien by making his experience available not only for this and future issues but also for our forthcoming conference and Alvise by using his expertise in matters technological to keep the blog updated and design the cover of this issue.

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Foreword

Variety, goes the old adage, is the spice of life. If this holds good and by 'life' one understands 'experience', this issue of *Skepsi*, our seventh, will add spice to the reading experience of whoever dips into it, as its title 'Miscellanea' suggests. Whilst being on very different topics, two of these articles are, however, linked by the fact that both were submitted in response to an essay competition promoted by *Skepsi*, the idea for which was developed back in the golden days of late summer last year. The competition invited current and former post-graduate students in Humanities and the Social Sciences to submit an essay which had been awarded a mark of at least 70%, so that they could taste the publishing experience. All the essays received in responses to this announcement, effectively a call for articles, would be peer reviewed and those then selected by the Editors would be published, after revision and copy editing, in the usual way. The response was an encouraging number of essays on a wide range of subjects, from which two were selected that are, with heartiest congratulations to the authors, presented in this issue.

Caleb Turner challenges the convention in, chiefly, Anglo-American cinema that seems to support stereotypical notions in Western culture which equate, on the one hand, 'hero' with 'human' and 'good' and, on the other, 'villain' with 'monster/inhuman' and 'evil', so that the one is seen as antithesis of the other. Through his examination of two different kinds of monsters, the digitally constructed one such as is found in films like *Transformers* and *Hulk*, and 'undesirables', in which term are included mutants, androids, hybrids and cyborgs such as Doc Ock in *Spiderman 2*, Turner argues that, far from being straightforward polar opposites, these concepts are the extremes of a broad spectrum that encompasses our concept of 'humanness'.

Examining Freud's observation in 'The Uncanny' that he 'cannot think of any genuine fairy story [...] that has anything uncanny about it', Melanie Dilly applies his theories of the uncanny in literature, together with those of, amongst others, Armitt, Bettelheim and Zipes, to the familiar fairy story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. She concludes that, if the views of these other critics are to be accepted, there is much in the fairy tale that could be uncanny but this does not mean that the genre is uncanny *per se*; the sense of the uncanny derives from the reading experience of its audience.

No monsters or uncanny phenomena feature in Emmanuelle Betham's article, a qualitative study of punctuation as used and understood by a small target group, which was

originally presented as a paper at the conference *The evolution of research: adapting to survive in a changing world* organised by the Post-Graduate Research Association and held at Canterbury Christ Church University in June 2011. Her study provides empirical data regarding, amongst other matters, punctuation's function in different contexts and subjective factors that may affect its use. She concludes that punctuation is a skill which cannot be acquired independently of the socio-cultural experience in which it is used and that more research is needed into the way it is taught.

No doubt reading was not quite the pleasure that Willmore, the eponymous Rover of Aphra Behn's 1681 play *The Rover*, had in mind, when he declares, 'Variety is the soul of pleasure' (Part II, Act I), but reading should be a pleasure and if variety gives it soul as well as adding spice, *Skepsi* is pleased to facilitate this.

Skepsi

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MISCELLANEA

'I will not die a monster!': The Transformation of the Human Body; its Portrayal, Interpretation and Storytelling in Contemporary Mainstream Anglo-American Cinema[1]

Caleb Turner

University of Kent

To see someone is to see a body. (Glover 1988: 70)

The portrayal of the body in the mainstream blockbuster 'movie' is one of a duality, with the limitless potential of how it might be audio-visually depicted on the one hand and, on the other, a more limited structure behind what that presentation might be *designed* to achieve in its expressive meaning. The argument of this article will focus on *how* and *why* the body is presented in films by concentrating on examples of that presentation at its most excessive and extreme. The article will also discuss how the human body is pushed to its very limits in terms of its representation, when this entails not so much definition and characterisation but more distortion and manipulation, as the body is forcibly altered by being extended, compressed, deconstructed or, quite literally, *re*constructed.

According to Scott Bukatman, the superhero story is one such type of mainstream film that particularly centres obsessively upon the body, presenting a *bodily* narrative and fantasy, with the body potentially becoming both:

> [an] irresistible force and unmoveable object […] [It is] enlarged and diminished, turned invisible or made of stone, blown to atoms or reshaped at will. The body defies gravity, space, and time; it divides and conquers, turns to fire, lives in water, is lighter than air. The body takes on animal attributes, merges with plantlife, is melded with metal. The body is asexual and homosexual, heterosexual, and hermaphroditic. Even the mind becomes a body; it is telepathic, telekinetic, transplantable, and controllable. Brainiac's brain sticks out of the top of his head, on display as part of a visible, external body. (Bukatman 2003: 49)

Hence, the area that will be explored is that of the *transformation* of the body, and what it means for the human form to be transformed from one entity into another within the storytelling process of mainstream Anglo-American cinema. This article will examine the phenomenon in mainstream films (including those which incorporate elements of 'fantasy', the 'supernatural', 'horror' and 'science fiction') of bodily transformations or 'transformative bodies', that is, bodies which undergo a visual 're-construction' from one original template to another differing model, by means of cinematic technology and special effects (including prosthetics, animatronics, digital animation/Computer Generated Imagery, performance, etc.);

[1] This article is a winner of the *Skepsi* 2011 Postgraduate Essay Competition (see Foreword).

in the course of this, issues concerning the spectator's understanding of and reaction to such entities will also be explored.

1. The pro-filmic[2] 'human' body versus the digitally constructed mutable 'monster': How do we engage/disengage with such entities as perceiving spectators?

Consider the scene a large, deep pit in the ground, filled with sand and small rocks, inert and lifeless. Suddenly, a few grains begin to move almost imperceptibly, sifting alongside each other, until a large mass is ultimately shifting from one side to another. The sand begins to coalesce into a large heap, struggling to maintain its cohesion. Eventually, a recognisable shape begins to emerge, a shape with traces mimicking a human form: a head, a torso, limbs resembling arms with hands and legs with feet; but with each attempt, the figure finally disintegrates. After a while, this process of constantly maintaining integrity of form transforms this mass of sand, this 'body' of discrete elements; it begins to resemble something more tangible and whole: a literal body, a *human* body. This sequence from *Spiderman 3* (2007) depicts the initial portrayal of the 'Sandman'[3], and one might notice just how the elements of the sand attempt to gain a physical integrity over the course of the action, showing a desperation to become humanised, soon achieving not only limbs or a torso but also facial features, skin texture and even an outer layer of clothing.

This transformation is one of a non-human entity gradually becoming humanised over time, eventually materialising into a conventional idea of the human form, (i.e. closely resembling our own collection of two arms, two legs, a torso and one head, etc.). As the figure walks into shot, and so towards the audience, he is no longer merely lifeless material or even only a semi-conscious entity that attempts to rise above its station but is now a *human being*. During the film *Transformers* (2007), pleasure is taken from specifically robotic transformations, with various mechanical devices including cars, planes, and other industrial machinery somehow being able to mimic the human form, reconstructing themselves with a head (and face), torso and shoulders, the limbs of arms and legs accompanied by their own individual hands and feet. While the true human form can never totally be attained, it is close enough for us to recognise it as being such, achieving a sense of acceptable familiarity associated with a preferred type of existence: one that incorporates a 'humanity'.

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[2] The term 'pro-filmic' was coined in the 1950s by French film academics (led by Etienne Souriau in his discussion on diegesis and the seven levels of filmic reality), denoting everything (or the selection of elements) intentionally placed in *front* of the camera and recorded on film as reality; including actors, costume, props, décor, etc.

[3] This figure might indeed be considered as a *contemporary* version of the Sandman in E.T.A. Hoffman's short story 'The Sandman' (1817), a figure which Sigmund Freud in his discipline of psychoanalysis claims to be associated with ideas of the 'Uncanny' or an entity that is simultaneously both strange yet familiar to us.

However, one might also acknowledge several examples that support an argument based on the inherently repulsive nature of the body undergoing transformation. One instance includes that of a non-human entity becoming only partially humanised over time or, in a sense, human*oid* rather than fully 'human' proper. There is one creature from the 2005 film *Constantine* who is a demon figure, made up solely from rats, crabs, flies and other insects, and, while we recognise the being as possessing limbs, a torso and even facial expressions, its lack of any true concrete or solid form tends to disgust us, especially its repulsively incomplete mimicking of the human form. It is interesting how, during the sequence in which this creature appears, it is the human body of Constantine, and so the actor Keanu Reeves, who is shown as the hero attempting to disrupt and disintegrate the demon's form, eventually succeeding in dismantling and so deconstructing this only *partially* constructed semi-human body back into its original material state of several different entities. The creature's dual nature, both far too human and yet not human enough in its appearance results in its being both threatening and repulsive.

The character Balthazar (Gavin Rossdale) is another villain in the film, or in this case a 'hybrid' as Constantine calls him, being a figure of pure evil hidden under a skin-deep layer of a human façade. When Constantine confronts this 'man' and throws holy water in his face, the hidden profile of a repulsively frightening texture of green decaying flesh and rotting teeth crafted through 'inhuman' designs is revealed, and we are given a transformation of the 'threatening' being unveiled by the removal of the 'familiar', of an evil being realised for what it truly is. The audience is being shown an obligatory formula found in more conventional/mainstream films, one that conforms to the spectrum of the 'good' human body overcoming the 'evil' hybrid monster. Instances such as those mentioned above are cinematic examples of a 'preferred' expression of the bodily transformation, with clear-cut notions behind what constitutes 'good' and 'evil', the 'acceptable' and the 'intolerable', the 'tolerated' and the 'abhorrent': the 'human' and the 'non-human'.

Initially, a distinction must be made between the differing concepts of the pro-filmic body (an actual 'flesh-and-blood' human actor or actress on screen) and a figure that has undergone a construction of sorts (in an attempt to alter that figure's physical form), either by way of make-up and prosthetics, performance itself or digital manipulation. The essay by Lisa Purse 'Digital Heroes in Contemporary Hollywood: Exertion, Identification, and the Virtual Action Body' raises a series of pertinent questions concerning the transformation of the body on film. Purse declares how both critics and spectators alike frequently tend to reject a body

that has strayed too far from its original human form. With this in mind, Purse analyses the Ang Lee film *Hulk* (2003), in which the stark juxtaposition of the Hulk's body with the actor Eric Bana results in the opposition of a 'real' human protagonist versus an animated creature protagonist counterpart. Bruce Banner is recognised by his human body, but the Hulk is not, causing this green beast not to possess any 'pro-filmic body referent', meaning that both are *two* sides of only *one* individual, and the transformation between the two actually achieves a *separation* of two disparate entities: 'setting up a "before and after" opposition that emphasises their physical differences' (Purse 2007: 13).

In spite of this, the most important point to realise is the apparent *unease* that exists, not with the duality of this superhero (from vulnerable human to alter-ego beast) but in what Purse deems to be 'the inherent visual *instability*' felt by most viewers towards the body of the fictitious Hulk (Purse 2007: 13). Fascinatingly, it is the intriguing question of *why* this unease is felt towards such an obviously fictional character that must be considered in depth. Rob White declares that any instabilities/inconsistencies that impact upon the perceptual realism of the Hulk's behaviour or interactions with his surrounding story-world and environment are *fully intentional*, alluding back to the contextual nature of its original subject matter (and textual roots) of the comic book (Purse 2007: 14). Purse points out that it is the very presentation of digital animation in a *live-action* context, and the 'expressionistic use of digital effects' designed simply to portray a 'virtually' unstable body (such as that of the Hulk) that viewers find most 'challenging' to accept as well as greatly undesirable (Purse 2007: 14).

At this juncture, it is necessary to set out what I believe to be the most important statement in Purse's argument pertaining to the issue proposed in this discussion. Concerning her views on the cinematic influence of the *mutable* body, she declares:

> [O]nce the comic-book body, frozen in arrested motion, is recreated in film – that is, once the *unstable*, *unpredictably* mutable body is *in motion* in a live-action film – it *problematises* our instinctive expectations about the physical behaviours of bodies in a live-action environment. The animation of the human body in a live-action context modifies the potential limits and behaviours of that body. Indeed, it re-figures the human body as *disturbing* and *unnatural* in its elasticity and capacity for infinite transformation and *re*configuration (Purse 2007: 15; added emphases)

The terms '*disturbing*' and '*unnatural*' are starkly fused with that of the potential a mutable body might possess for 'elasticity' as well as a capacity for an 'infinite' transformation into a 're-configuration' of the originally pro-filmic body. Again, another important comment from this argument states how this fearful reaction is founded upon a far deeper set of prejudicial concerns:

> At base, the animated body's inherent malleability generates anxieties that are rooted in primal cultural fears about metamorphosis and its characterisation of the human body as mutable […] in the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, metamorphosis signifies 'instability, perversity, unseemliness, monstrosity […] in the Christian heaven, nothing is mutable, whereas in hell, everything combines and recombines in terrible amalgams… breeding hybrids, monsters – and mutants'. Purse 2007: 15

Within the threshold of this reasoning, the animated virtual body apparently draws to itself (through the act of 'a rather contingent photorealism') an awareness of its 'instability' and 'mutability', unfolding an even greater sense of dread towards this 'instrumental realisation of physical metamorphosis' resulting in a feeling of being obliterated and only left with our 'shattered and dispersed selves' (Purse 2007: 15). This inherent mutability of the virtual action body must by default 'reverberate' with prejudices and fears of an equally 'phenomenological' instability, with the distinct self being *lost* somehow (Purse 2007: 16).

These ideological notions echo past concerns voiced by philosopher René Descartes, when discussing how certain automata have become increasingly 'lifelike' in contemporary societies, or what Sigmund Freud describes as being the 'Uncanny' (Short 2005: 111). With regard to cinematically-altered bodies, as verisimilitude begins to threaten our concept of what constitutes human uniqueness, it also shakes the very 'foundations' upon which the alleged superiority felt by human beings rests (Short 2005: 111). This threat is felt most within such films that embody science fictional narratives or other fantastical tales such as the supernatural, extrapolating fears by presenting a multitude of creatures and creations that are able to mimic the human appearance almost fully in an increasingly accurate manner (Short 2005: 111).

With this in mind, a series of questions begin to emerge. Is the pro-filmic body considered as the inherently *preferred* human body? Is the mutable transformation presented as no more than a non-human hybrid? Is there a distinction between a 'virtuous' type of humanness and a 'monstrous' or villainous type? Are there actually several differing versions of humanness in existence? This assumed preference for the pro-filmic body over the mutable one is potentially problematised and nuanced by instances in which these two conditions appear to be the extremes of a spectrum (so change from one to another is gradual), whilst being portrayed in the guise of oppositions.

For example, consider the 1999 film *The Mummy*. Our very first introduction to the Mummy causes both revulsion and horror. The incompleteness of this supernatural being testifies to how unnatural and monstrous it truly is, a feat achieved by the image of a corpse acting as would a living person. As the monster is resurrected and enacts the curse that

created it millennia ago, it begins to take from the cursed grave-robbers who unwittingly brought it to life their flesh, their skin, their eyes and even their internal organs, so that the gaps in the abomination's make up are soon filled. In time, after it has hunted down the team of excavators one by one, yet more tissue exists where previously there was none. Later, yet more layers of living tissue are acquired, leaving only slight traces of a monstrous decomposition on the face and body of this creature.

Eventually, the transformation is complete, with the Mummy appearing in the fashion of a complete human being. In spite of this, while this being has been transformed into a pro-filmic human form, the character still evokes a sense of disgust because it is seen as 'unnatural'. Indeed, this character is presented as a villain by his actions: torture and murder, and though his body may still potentially become mutable in the form of sand manipulation, this is not the only reason why we feel repulsed by him. The deep-seated memory of the character's origins (that of the monster at the film's beginning) is all too strongly situated in our interpretations at the level of his ongoing behaviour, actions and appearance: his pro-filmic form snarls, scowls and grimaces in a fashion both reminiscent and evocative of the mutable monster underneath.

The pro-filmic body, in this instance, not so much masks as *extends* the Mummy's monstrous visage, gestures and mannerisms, by acting as a reflecting echo as well as concealing veneer. While the monster is played by a pro-filmic actor (Arnold Vosloo), the original incomplete creature still lies under the human textures of muscle tissue, flesh and skin, with the potential to reappear at any given moment: perpetually posing as an unfamiliar threat. In this way, the pro-filmic body is not always in itself a guarantee for establishing a sense of positive familiarity against an unfamiliar mutable force of erratic unpredictability. The Mummy has been transformed from an entity of unfamiliarity (the mutable monster) into a being of familiarity (the pro-filmic human being), but this does not achieve the transformation of a renewed sense of toleration towards the character, as his external appearance is not enough to displace those memories of his former monster self.

Rather than a straightforward opposition between the pro-filmic actor (human/hero) and the mutable creature (non-human/potential villain), the space between these two extremes is peopled with several differing variations. It is essential, therefore, to pursue this question on what is considered as being a 'human' or a 'non-human' visual representation of the body in the cinema. From there, the discussion will 'bridge the gap' or, better, identify the spectrum between so-called 'non-human' bodies that are plainly 'humanised' and, conversely, almost

completely 'humanised' bodies that are just as plainly presented as being 'non-human'. In this way, it should become clear that there exists between the two extremes a 'grey area', and it is this issue that will be extensively explored. Although a demon born of fire and brimstone has always traditionally been seen as a monstrous 'hybrid' foreign to the heavenly body of the wholly complete and 'pure' human being, the divine angel nonetheless still possesses a pair of animalistic wings.

2. A focus on cyborgs, androids, hybrids and other such 'undesirables' within Anglo-American cinema/Western society and culture.

The term 'hybridity' itself was originally used as a definition to describe the process of 'cross-fertilisation' in botany and zoology, in which an 'inter-breeding' takes place between two different species, either plant or animal (Short 2005: 107). In relation to the influence of cross-cultural integrations around the world, however, its meaning takes on a far more multi-faceted and controversial series of interpretations (Short 2005: 107). By applying the term to humans, a subjective reasoning is suggested by some critics in attempts to confirm the idea that fundamental distinctions exist between different peoples, additionally implying that these should in no way at all be 'traversed' (Short 2005: 107). The critics Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes equally declare how 'hybridity signals the threat of "contamination" to those who espouse an essentialist notion of pure and authentic origins' (Short 2005: 107).

The 'cyborg', or more specifically the 'cybernetic organism', is indeed such a hybrid, consisting of both organic human flesh and electronically-powered synthetic bionic technology. Films that feature the cyborg explore the notion that, as we, the viewers, watch onscreen the process of making these figures, we additionally 'on occasion, unmake our conceptions of ourselves' (Pyle 2000: 125). Indeed, the cyborg serves not only as a 'focal figure' of American techno-science popular culture but, more importantly, as 'a figuration of post-human identity in post-modernity' in general (Balsamo 1996: 18). Those inorganic components replacing various parts of the body such as limbs, internal organs and so forth often provide a 'super-human' ability compared to their original organic counterparts. The cinematic cyborg is also the progeny of a dual heritage, constantly 'tested' in cinematic narratives by being asked to prove the allegiance they hold to their human creators and to 'humanity' itself, through the means of a reiteration of specific ideals supposedly held dear to human beings (Short 2005: 108).

This is explained at length by J. P. Telotte, when he says:

> Centering on the artificial, technologised body – [such as] the robot, [the] cyborg, [or the] android […] [we might] examine our ambivalent feelings about technology, our increasing anxieties about our own nature in a technological environment, and a kind of evolutionary fear that these artificial selves may presage our own disappearance or *termination*. At the root of that fear […] is a blurred or 'weakening [...] sense' of the human, a loss of distinction. (Telotte 1992: 26)

In relation to the transformative process taking place with the cinematic cyborg, the 'manufactured bodies' of these hybrids should not merely be classified as a medium for special effects displays (prosthetic, digital or otherwise) but should, in point of fact, be realised as 'measures' for our *own* 'human level' of manufacture and our *own* constructedness (Telotte 1992: 28).

Notions of the 'organic' as opposed to the 'technological' (that may also function in a bidirectional or potentially alternating fashion), bound up as they are with connotations of the 'human' *versus* the non-human', have resulted in an inherent fear of and, consequently, prejudice against the latter; hence acceptance of the physically integral pro-filmic body (the supposed 'human' state) and revulsion towards the mutably transformative body (the apparent 'non-human' state). Using the context of the cyborg, this article will now discuss how Western culture holds prejudices against certain types of transformation and how this is expressed in the narrative text by mainstream cinema, a discussion underlined by the distinctions between 'man' and 'machine', the 'organic' and the 'technological', hence between the flesh-and-blood 'human being' and the partially flesh-and-blood human construct or 'de-construction' or 're-figuration' of concepts epitomising the human persona as it is known.

When the character Doc Ock in *Spiderman 2* (2004) is closely analysed, it is noticeable how several cues, actions and devices occur in the storytelling that present a narrative of inner turmoil, particularly in the depiction of how his internal emotional state is materialised externally by way of a technologically-aided transformation. First, however, it is necessary to put the character in context with some background information. Before the actual act of Doctor Octavius's (Alfred Molina) transformation, the man is shown to be a scientist whose dedication verges on an obsessive concern with his work. By building a set of four mechanical tentacles, Ock has constructed an extension of himself designed for the sole purpose of allowing him to progress further in his project of achieving a nuclear type of sustainable fusion. These mechanical tentacles, being a series of bionic extensions (designed to access nuclear radiations and temperatures intolerable to the human touch) are fitted with

claw-like pincers, with the lower portion of these metallic arms designed to be inserted directly into the spinal cord of the host.

During the public unveiling of his experiment, and as we are shown the arms attaching themselves to his spine, several needles implant themselves along the length of his back, penetrating the skin and forcing together a bodily fusion of both man and machine. This action elicits a negative reaction from the surrounding crowd, all of whom visibly and audibly express a gesture of disgust and outrage, presumably echoing that of the audience watching the screen. Once attached, the mechanical arms seem to become serpents as they move like animals around Ock's body, snapping out threateningly when Ock explains how he has prevented their artificially-intelligent minds from overpowering his own by way of an inhibitor chip. As the experiment proceeds, all goes horribly wrong: the inhibitor chip is broken, with the result that the arms fuse themselves with his neural pathways and nervous system. The consequence of this is even more catastrophic: when a surgical operation to separate Ock from his new technologised limbs is attempted, the metallic tentacles instinctively kill doctors and nurses. As Ock comes round and realises what has happened to him, he cries out in horror, causing the arms to mimic the same emotions (they additionally show his surprise, his rage, his sadness, etc., whenever he does). Now the two entities are both one and the same: in effect, inseparable.

In an abandoned church, situated way out on a pier in the harbour, Ock contemplates taking his own life; disgusted and outraged by his new body, he considers killing these monsters which slither and hiss around him like snakes. Sensing their imminent deaths, the leering claws cry out, snapping and declaring their own outrage; they take over Ock's consciousness by renewing his obsession with the reason behind their creation, so prompting him to resume his failed and dangerous experiment. A sinister circle of mechanical arms menacingly surrounds and dominates Ock, who realises that inside his head there are voices, foreign to his own body and speaking to him compellingly.

It is important to note here that, as Ian Burkitt points out, popular culture in the Western world has 'grown accustomed' to 'Cartesian dualism': the concept that the free will and 'clarity of thought' allowed to us by our rational mind puts us close to the divine, whereas, so far as our body is concerned, this is no different from those of animals, a mere physical automaton (Burkitt 1999: 7). Burkitt, however, challenges traditional notions that the mind and the body are separated from one another, reiterating that if 'damage occurs to our bodies we do not just note this, we *feel* it. The mind records this occurrence as if *it* has been injured,

so that the relationship we have with our bodies is an intimate and necessary one' (Burkitt 1999: 11). For Burkitt, the mind is actually 'an *effect* of bodily action in the world' (Burkitt 1999: 12; added emphases). The body, when viewed in this way, might evoke the perspective of 'a multi-dimensional approach to the body and the person, which conceives of human beings as complexes composed of both the material and the symbolic […] rather than as divided between the material and the representational' (Burkitt 1999: 2).

The interactions between Doc Ock's human mind and mechanical body could be construed as having implications for Cartesian dualism, perhaps as an attempt to destabilise its approach as the emphasis on a degree of interrelatedness between mind and body blurs the distinction between them. When Ock stares directly at one of the claws, it subtly opens and shuts, almost as if mouthing at him, whispering or even, perhaps, speaking to him. The man moves to the right, but his path is blocked by one arm; he moves to the left and, again, is barred by yet another. Like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the serpent-arms collectively tempt Ock, telling him to steal, to kill, to do anything to rebuild his experimentation. 'The real crime would be not to finish what *we* started' is Ock's response; he has begun referring to himself as a collective.

Towards the end of the film, Ock is back in the rundown church on the old pier repeating his deadly procedure, in the course of which his tentacles are damaged by Spiderman. The mechanical arms themselves shy away in self-pity but Ock is now shown to have a greater degree of control over them: he soon agrees to stop his experiment for the safety of the entire city and commands them accordingly; at this, bionic limbs look at him in shock, cowering simultaneously. Although the mechanical arms are still not only a part of his body but also a part of his mind, he is now in total control. This turn of events now suggests that the mind has *regained* dominance over the body, perhaps *re*affirming traditional assumptions of Cartesian dualism. Thus, although these films might attempt to destabilise notions of the mind/body duality, their endeavour to define any universal conception of 'human being' by presenting the myriad of contradictions inherent throughout Western popular culture in effect cannot also but help to reaffirm such notions. In writing about popular culture such as this, Elaine L. Graham suggests that, indeed, any attempt to affirm a solid definition of humanity or 'to delineate an absolute 'human nature' as a form of ontological purity cannot fail, paradoxically, to invoke [also] its others, thereby subverting its own stability and fixity' (Graham 2002: 228).

'I will not die a monster' Doc Ock cries out, whilst destroying the machinery that makes up his experimentations, and so falls through the floor and down to the ocean bed as the pier collapses. Although Doc Ock dies as part man, part machine, both physically and mentally, his decision to go down to the sea bottom with the destructive power of his experiment and personal obsession shows that he still retains a last remaining shred of his humanity. He may have become a monster of technology and a product of abused science but he still attempts to die as some form of 'human being'.

What is most interesting about his transformation is that it is one of an internal obsession which becomes externally materialised by way of science and technology. When Ock tries to quell this obsession, he cannot do so, and both his torment and demented fury find expression in the actions of his transformation (the violent, animalistic, sinister, dominant control and aggression of the claws themselves). Being self-aware, the arms are able to respond to the consciousness of his human body, which, in turn, reflects the selfish emotions felt by the snake-like arms: although faceless, the tentacles themselves not only express their own personal emotions but also mirror Ock's own expressions, and vice versa. Ock is presented as a character that has lost his humanity by becoming too much of a part of and consciously influenced by artificially-intelligent mechanical technologies, only regaining his higher functions after being allowed to overcome his bionic counterparts. The type of narrative expressed here is one concerned with a fear or dread of becoming too much of a part of the technological or the scientifically constructed entity and thus, as in Ock's case, forsaking the human soul for the purpose of an obsession.

Although the Doctor was shown to be an obsessive *before* the transformation took place, in time he still acts and behaves like a 'human being' complete with a 'human conscience' (thus retaining a sense of his 'humanity'), as his being allowed to overcome the bionic arms completely shows; however, he is also part of a technological cyborg body, albeit not completely subsumed by the dangers of that condition. This implies that while the arms are a negative influence on Ock, causing us to see him as a villain, we can also engage with him as a figure of good, rather than purely evil. It is his own ability either to forsake his humanity for his obsessions or to abandon his experiments for the sake of humanity itself that has the greater impact on the artificially-intelligent mechanical tentacles, rather than the influence of the technology alone. He is a hybrid, yes, he is also a cyborg, but he is not simply a man who became a monster, with a duality existing between the (good) human and the (evil)

technologically non-human: the character caused the transformation due to his own nature, and that transformation could only ever be a reflection of that very same disposition.

The cyborg is thus a useful catalyst for calling into question both the degree to which identity, including factors of race, gender, class, nationality or political orientation, is itself a construction, the pertinence of such definitions and the criteria upon which they are based (Short 2005: 106). Cinematic portrayals of the cyborg should be considered not just as potentially utopian or dystopian predictions: they are, alternatively, 'reflections of a contemporary state of being [...] [with such a body constituting] in its fundamental structure the multiple fears and desires of a culture caught in the process of transformation' (González 2000: 58).

Within fictional stories concerning the cyborg, an imminent danger exists that any imitations performed by this entity might become far too 'close for comfort', in effect threatening the 'uniqueness' of human beings (Short 2005: 110). Such examples as the differently grooved fingertips possessed by the androids in *Westworld* (1973), and the replicates in *Blade Runner* (1982), unable to express a 'blush response' are explorative devices, highlighting an inherent anxiety behind the question of 'what if the gap between 'us' and 'other' narrows? What if we can no longer tell each other apart?' (Short 2005: 110-11) The Western ideology of 'Imperialism' in particular, has historically legitimised itself by establishing a spectrum of opposing entities, with 'humanity' utilised as a differentiating tool to exclude 'Others' (Short 2005: 106). There is a conceit that exists in the narratives of science fiction , whereby positive traits (compassion, tolerance, empathy, understanding, etc.) are 'claimed' as being human, while more negative traits (aggression, megalomania, ruthlessness, unfairness, etc.) are associated with a 'convenient' Other: a historically-rooted process of subjugation (Short 2005: 110).

When Doc Ock declares, 'I will not die a monster!', his statement should be understood not just as merely a desire to return to the original template of his former self but as a wish to be accepted as he is in his current identity. His outcry is one that echoes not only the perception, in mainstream Anglo-American cinema, of all transformations but also the fundamental inadequacy of inaccurately representing as oppositional the spectrum that ranges from human/pro-filmic to non-human/mutably-altered. Just as a transformative process causes the human identity to become re-constructed as another entity, so the notion of what it is actually to possess a human identity is potentially a transformative construction in itself: and this is also true of its expression in the storytelling process.

There exist *several* versions of humanness, then, rather than a singular universal model. Bukatman reminds us that many writers and theorists of post-modernism (i.e. in challenging 'absolutes') are quite 'fond of cataloguing the crumbling of [any] foundational oppositions', questioning such binary oppositions as: 'organic/inorganic, male/female, originality/duplication, (image/reality, artifice/nature), human/nonhuman' (Bukatman 1993: 10). It seems that to formulate a construction of humanness, especially in a mainstream Hollywood text, is to also create a set of narrative devices that not only *mimic* human behaviour but also positions that behaviour within the threshold of a context designed solely to elicit a *specific* meaning upon them: this, in itself, is by no means a 'natural' process' (Wood 2002: 134). This is similarly the case for transformations. To be properly 'human' does not simply mean to be either biologically or physically human but also to *behave* in recognisably human ways or to possess behaviour that at least constitutes a particular degree of human*ness*, regardless of whether or not that humanness is preferred (Wood 2002: 118).

It is additionally prudent to realise, though, that none of these behaviours are fundamentally universal, even if a Western mainstream text portrays them to be so (Wood 2002: 118). The humanist ideal, being the assumption of 'an absolute difference between human and the inhuman […] with only the former [having] the capacity for rational thought' supposes that while as a collective society we may all be made up of very different types of varying body, because 'reason is a property of the mind, deep down *we are all the same*' (Badmington 2000: 4; added emphases).

This particular conception of what constitutes humanness or that of a 'core humanity' with 'common essential features in terms of which human beings can be defined and understood' is very much elevated to the status of 'common sense in contemporary Western culture' (Badmington 2000: 4). If one were to declare an entity as being human, or 'human-like' or to possess humanoid characteristics, such distinctions need the further realisation of the ways in which these qualities both relate to and are defined by (as well as being founded upon) a specific set of cultural paradigms (Wood 2002: 118). Several instances of humanness and bodily transformations from one type of humanness to another in mainstream Hollywood cinema are based solely around Western, and in particular American interests and concerns, predominantly featuring 'middle-class' and 'white' characters who undergo such experiences (Wood 2002: 118).

A mainstream motion picture will pre-emptively validate one type of behaviour and bodily transformation over another, constituting a suitable and 'appropriate' condition of

being human, with other less preferable transformations and resultantly unconventional types of humanness as being invalidated in the text (Wood 2002: 118). This of course means that texts such as these cannot represent an absolute or definitive classification of a truly universal humanness, but in fact gives cause to acknowledge that to be human is to abide by a formula of representation, established by: ‘a series of behaviours that exist in relation to a set of normative values embedded in social relations’ (Wood 2002: 118).

3. Conclusion: What constitutes ‘humanness’ itself as a concept?

Initially it was argued that the pro-filmic body is considered as the inherently *preferred* human body and the mutable transformation as no more than a non-human hybrid, although a simple distinction is made between, on the one hand, a ‘villainous’ type which is basically monstrous and, on the other, a ‘virtuous’ type which manifests traits of humanness, although humanness exits in several different versions. Many of these are, however, dominated by a selected few, an acceptable set favoured over others because they conform to ideals propagated by Western, and particularly Anglo-American, culture. Our reactions to a bodily transformation may consist of fear of a body that has become excessively mutable and strayed far from the human form, but this is not simply due to an innate love for the ‘sacred’ pro-filmic profile and an instinctive prejudice towards anything outside that margin: it is because in mainstream cinema most mutable bodies are *designed* to elicit repulsion, disgust, fear and outrage.

Dominated by conventional assumptions and expectations associated with most of its popular genres, Hollywood repeats this established formula of pro-filmic hero versus mutable villain time and time again. Western prejudices focus on the acceptable ‘self’ and the unacceptable ‘other’, so human bodies battle against physical alteration into anything foreign: the technological, the supernatural, the organically alien and so on. This formula dictates how, in these texts, a character that has undergone a transformation acts and behaves, so that the humanity retained by the transformed body is seen to be limited; it is no longer entirely human. Since ‘other’ entities are deemed intolerable, only a particular type of conventional humanness, then, is allowed to prevail over forms they manifest. Hence, both our reactions to a transformation and what that transformation is able to say and do within the mainstream cinematic storytelling process are dominated by the paradigms and prejudices of Western-based values and ideologies particularly those defined by American, white, middle-class and mostly male comprehensions.

As the human body is a template epitomising a preferred version of what it is to be human, possessing a preferred humanness, *any* movement away from this form and *any* movement not close enough to or able to *totally* attain this form is portrayed as a threat. As an audience, we are only allowed by this system to engage positively with what is deemed to be a 'human' body hero, and only undergo partial positive engagements with so called non-threatening semi-human forms. Villains/monsters appear to constitute strictly any entity situated outside of this threshold. If one is to look more closely, however, each of those characters who potentially evolve into a differing version of humanness are not monsters per se but merely human beings with a transformed identity of their own, still possessing a degree of humanness, just not necessarily an 'acceptable' Western version. The implication of this apparent contradiction is that, as Western popular cultural attempts to define humanness as a universal concept, it inevitably results in destabilisation.

In terms of how anthropocentrism[4] is represented in these films, what is important is not necessarily *how* humanness is expressed by a transformation in mainstream cinema but *what* variation of humanness is imparted upon an audience. A transformation of any kind is not merely a progression away from or towards the essence of what it is to be human but is simply no more than another type of human construction, another version of humanness. This version, however, if not placed firmly within the confines of a culturally tolerable or preferred margin (i.e. that decided by Western society), is deemed to be utterly unacceptable. The transformations discussed in this article have a common theme, namely the lack of acceptance felt by an 'other' and also by those beings who have felt displaced by their societies for whatever reason, a displacement manifested by way of a bodily transformation; such a being as Doc Ock, after losing his identity with what makes him human, does indeed, as a result, attempt to overcome the prejudices against him and rejection that he experiences but often only succeeds in merely being accepted as a tolerated abnormality.

Therefore, just as Hollywood figuratively expresses notions of the hero and the villain, of 'good' and 'evil', so does this form of cinema portray its equally prejudicial ideas and doctrines through its portrayal of bodily transformations which result in constructed 'demonic' monsters against which are pitted 'angelic' pro-filmic actors. This form of cinema thus pre-emptively projects its society's paradigms and prejudices pertaining to notions of the acceptable 'human' body and the unacceptable 'non-human' body: of those entities

[4] A view or doctrine regarding man as the central fact of the universe, to which all surrounding facts have reference (OED).

considered 'preferable' and those merely 'tolerated'. Perhaps what is being presented to be most threatening in mainstream Anglo-American cinema is not a bodily transformation from the human to a non-human form but the transformation from one identity to another, from a sense of the conventional to the intangible. In all of the films discussed, the body of a fictional character determines who that character is, symbolising what that individual and their society or culture represents.

Nonetheless, while these films typically affirm established assumptions and expectations about a concept of 'universal humanness', to an extent they also still seem capable of at the very least being subversive, since at times they choose to question the firm validity of these paradigms, while operating from within the constraints of mainstream conventions. To alter a body, then, is to alter a series of connotations, an association of ideas as well. In the same way that Doc Ock refused to die a monster, regardless of his mutable-alterations, the messages expressed in these films also explore the importance of what a character *wishes* to morally stand-for, to *ethically* embody at any given moment: both physically and mentally. These individuals choose to aspire towards an ideal of being better in some way, or perhaps 'improve' the association of ideas that they previously embodied beforehand, challenging prejudices expressed against them, which is ultimately the most significant of the transformations to recognise.

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Chopping Down a Beanstalk? The (Un-)Uncanniness of Freud's Concept of the Fairy Tale[1]

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In Western society today, fairy tales are widely perceived as something nice to tell children before they go to bed. The stories with their compulsory happy ending are a good basis for sweet dreams as there is nothing scary about them (Zipes 2000: xxv).[2] One might think they are so distant from our real world that parents and children alike can see the difference and that neither parents nor children experience them as something uncanny.

In his essay 'The Uncanny' (Freud 1997),[3] Sigmund Freud describes what it means when life and literature are 'uncanny' or, in German, *unheimlich*.[4] He clearly shows that there is more to this feeling than just weirdness and fear. He tries to deduce the full meaning of *unheimlich* by first examining its antonym *heimlich*. He discovers that the meanings of *heimlich* fall into two groups, the one, 'belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly' (Freud 1997: 196) and the other, its opposite, '[c]concealed, kept from sight [...] withheld from others' (Freud 1997: 198). Freud concludes that *unheimlich* is a subspecies of *heimlich* in this second meaning (Freud 1997: 201) and can thus be defined as everything that should 'have remained secret and hidden but has come to light' (Freud 1997: 200). He further shows that something is uncanny when a reader is confronted with infantile complexes which had been repressed up until then or with surmounted, primitive beliefs (Freud 1997: 226). Some possible forms of these complexes and beliefs are a lack of understanding of the animate or inanimate (Freud 1997: 205, 209), the castration and oedipal complexes (Freud 1997: 206–08), the 'double' and constant recurrence (Freud 1997: 210), the 'dread of the evil eye' (Freud 1997: 216), the 'omnipotence of thoughts' (Freud 1997: 216) and death-related aspects (Freud 1997: 218f). Thus, the uncanny describes something initially familiar which has been estranged from the adult through repression (Freud 1997: 217).

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1 This article is a winner of the Skepsi 2011 Postgraduate Essay Competition (see Foreword).

2 The fairy tale's 'compulsory happy ending' is a relatively recent phenomenon; this article does not consider its earlier version where this is not the case.

3 First published as 'Das Unheimliche' in 1919.

4 This is a problematic term to translate, as Freud himself discusses (Freud 1997: 195). Traditionally, it is translated in the context of Freud's essay as 'uncanny' but dictionary translations include 'uneasy', 'gloomy', 'haunted' 'eerie' and 'sinister', depending on the context.

With regard to animism, Freud stresses 'that an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced' (Freud 1997: 221).[5] In the final chapter he extends this aspect to fiction. As long as things happen in accordance with the given 'poetic reality', that is, the world that the writer has chosen to represent, there is no uncanniness (Freud 1997: 226). However, the writer may choose a poetic reality that resembles reality (Freud 1997: 227). In this sense, some aspects which would not evoke a sense of the uncanny in fiction would do so in real life (Freud 1997: 226) but at the same time there are more possibilities of creating uncanniness in fiction than there are in reality (Freud 1997: 228). Freud leaves the reader puzzling over this paradox, which I will discuss in detail later. However, Freud declares that no 'genuine fairy story [...] has anything uncanny about it (Freud 1997: 223); it is, therefore, exceptional in fiction in that it cannot evince a sense of the uncanny, so can be seen as exemplifying 'un-uncanniness' in literature.

In the course of examining in detail Freud's understanding of the fairy tale and its relationship to the uncanny, this article will demonstrate that Freud's view on the fairy tale, a literary genre which is a topic much discussed by critics, is not the only one and that other perspectives are all equally valid. Literary companions have been published by Zipes (Zipes 2000) and by Davidson and Chaudri (Davidson and Chaudri 2003); Propp (Propp 1994; first published 1927) breaks down the fairy tale into its morphological components. Many critics, among them Armitt (Armitt 1996), Cornwell (Cornwell 1990), Nikolajeva (Nikolajeva 2001), Todorov (Todorov 1975) and Zipes (Zipes 1985; 1991; 2000), try to position the fairy tale within fantasy literature but of these critics only Armitt and Zipes make any attempt to link the fairy tale to Freud's concept of the uncanny. Furthermore, although his discussion of the fairy tale is an important part of the essay's third chapter, literary criticism seems to have neglected Freud's opinion that fairy tales are not uncanny when discussing his essay. Kofman (Kofman 1991) offers only a very short reading; astonishingly, even such an important work on the uncanny as Nicholas Royle's *The uncanny* (Royle 2003) makes no reference to this passage. The purpose of this article is to pay Freud's discussion of the fairy tale the attention it deserves by situating it within the wider context of fiction and uncanniness and examining the various perspectives of it offered by literary criticism.

[5] Freud does not define 'reality' or 'real life' in his essay. Other terms that he uses without telling the reader how they have to be understood are 'psychical reality' and 'material reality' (Freud 1997:221). For the purposes of this literary analysis essay it might be sufficient to distinguish between reality as an actual experience and what 'we merely picture or read about' (Freud 1997:224).

The first section discusses Freud's arguments in the context of his entire essay as well as the point of view from which Freud looks at fairy tales. In this context Armitt's work will be very interesting. Turning to the paradox mentioned earlier, the second section will first explain it, as it is meant by Freud; it will then show what impact an expanded view of the relationship between fiction and reality might have on this paradox and, thus, also on a discussion of the fairy tale. The third section focuses on an important aspect of the fairy tale to which Freud clearly pays insufficient attention in his essay, namely, genre: what is a fairy tale? In this regard, Armitt, Nikolajeva and Zipes all manifest differing views on the fairy tale's genre; these might, or might not, support Freud's view that the fairy tale is inherently 'un-uncanny'. In the fourth section, I will use a discussion of the British fairy tale 'Jack and the Beanstalk' to exemplify these different perspectives.

1. (Un-)Uncanny Elements in Fiction and Fairy Tales

In the third chapter of 'The Uncanny', Freud begins his discussion of the relationship between fiction and the uncanny by observing that 'not everything that recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking' is uncanny (Freud 1997: 222). He observes that certain phenomena which have an uncanny effect in other fiction do not when they are woven into what is clearly a fairy story. In fairy tales, '[w]ish-fulfilments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects [...] can exert no uncanny influence' (Freud 1997: 226). He gives as examples the story of Snow White, who 'opens her eyes again' as if returning from the dead, and the myth of Pygmalion's 'beautiful statue [which] comes to life' (Freud 1997: 222–23). The fairy tale is not uncanny because 'the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted' (Freud 1997: 226).

According to Freud, whilst fiction is not necessarily but may well be uncanny, the fairy tale is never uncanny, the reason being that it can never meet the preconditions for uncanniness: it is too distanced from the real world, a fact of which the reader or listener is aware as soon as he hears the keywords 'Once upon a time…' (Tiffin 2009: 16). Freud argues that the reader of or listener to a fairy tale knows that the laws of the real world are suspended: wishes can be promptly fulfilled, inanimate objects can be animate and magic can arbitrarily determine the action, so it is no surprise when a sausage attaches itself to someone's nose, a harp sings and beans sprout up to the sky overnight, and the reader or listener need have no fear of encountering such a situation or objects in real life, because he knows that such things are only to be found in the fictional realm of the fairy tale.

These typical features of the fairy tale are amongst those phenomena which, if encountered in reality, would create a sense of the uncanny, because they appear to confirm the 'old, discarded beliefs' of 'our primitive forefathers' (Freud 1997: 224); the poetic reality of the fairy tale, Freud argues, is thus grounded in the animistic system of beliefs from the outset. As this poetic reality is accepted by the reader, there is no conflict of judgement as to whether or not these beliefs have been surmounted, so the presence of these phenomena in the fairy tale does not evoke a sense of the uncanny in the reader. But the conflict of judgement is only one of the reasons why a sense of the uncanny is aroused in reality. What about the other phenomena which also have this effect and which Freud instances in his second chapter: the castration and oedipal complexes, the 'double', the 'constant recurrence of the same thing' or the 'dread of the evil eye'? Freud only looks for, and finds, those elements of the fairy tale that would evoke a sense of the uncanny in other contexts, he does not look for other elements of the fairy tale that are uncanny within its own context, that is, not only the fairy tale itself but everything that has to do with it. This one-sided perspective has the result that Freud fails to address certain aspects of the uncanny when discussing the fairy tale, in particular, the castration and oedipal complexes, which he regards as important causes of the uncanny in real life (Freud 1997: 206–09).[6]

Bettelheim shows in *The Uses of Enchantment* (Bettelheim 1991) that these aspects can indeed be found in fairy tales. He reads 'Snow White', for example, as representing the oedipal complex but with the roles of the parents reversed: the mother, in this case the step-mother queen, is the pubescent child's competitor and thus the 'dreaded' parent, and the hunter, who protects the child by failing to carry out the queen's orders and tricking her into believing that the child has been killed, is the father-figure (Bettelheim 1991: 204–05).[7] The story about Cinderella, meanwhile, in which each Ugly Sister mutilates herself in her attempt to force her foot into the slipper (itself a symbol for the vagina) serves as an illustration of the castration anxiety (Bettelheim 1991: 268).[8] Bettelheim himself does not address the question that then arises, if we accept that there are elements in fairy tales – such as the oedipal complex in 'Snow White' or the castration anxiety in 'Cinderella' – which would be uncanny

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[6] For a definition see Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1977) and especially pp. 329–38 and 317f.

[7] According to Freud the oedipal complex can present in girls as well as boys, but, in this case the roles of the parents are reversed so that there is 'an affectionate attachment to her father [and] a need to get rid of her mother as superfluous and to take her place' (Freud 1977: 333).

[8] For a discussion of the relationship between castration anxiety and the oedipal complex, see further Freud (1977: 317f).

in another context such as real life namely: is it possible that these elements are uncanny in fairy tales, too, or is the fairy tale a place where *nothing* is uncanny?

Freud would appear to say yes, the fairy tale is a place where *nothing* is uncanny but, as has been demonstrated, his opinion is based on an analysis of the fairy tale that is limited to a consideration of only one of its elements. Armitt, who dismisses Freud's discussion of fairy tale and fantasy literature as a 'blinkered reading' (Armitt 1996: 42), maintains that, on the contrary, the fairy tale *is* a place where things can be uncanny. Armitt's work is particularly interesting because she focuses on the child's reading experience rather than the adult's, in contrast to Freud, who seems to have in mind adult readers only. This is significant because, as previously indicated, Freud maintains that 'an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced' (Freud 1997: 221); this implies that his criterion for excluding the fairy tale from the concept of the uncanny depends on an ability on the part of the reader/listener to distinguish between imagination and reality and so, as I have said, appreciate that the laws of reality are suspended in the fairy tale. We cannot be sure that a child, particularly a very young child, *does* distinguish between reality and fiction in quite the same way as an adult does, so we cannot anticipate whether the fairy tale will evoke in the child an uncanny reading experience. Armitt concentrates her attention on the way in which the fairy tale seems to offer the child the comfortingly familiar, when 'the fairy tale's apparent consolations are really "false friends"' (Armitt 1996: 46) and describes the adult from whom the child hears the fairy tale as 'a sinister wolf indeed, luring the child into a truly *unheimlich* [uncanny] sense of false security and misplaced trust' (Armitt 1996: 45), which implies that although the adult is aware of their uncanniness, he/she nonetheless introduces the child to fairy tales. As I shall discuss further in the next section, this concept is similar to Freud's idea of the author who betrays the reader and 'deceives [him] by promising to give [him] the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it' (Freud 1997: 223).

The question is not whether or not a fairy tale is uncanny *per se* but whether or not it evokes an uncanny reading experience, as I shall discuss later; this reading experience is an ongoing process rather than a matter of instant realisation. A child is led into the fairy world where there are always happy endings. It later learns, to its disappointment, that the world of reality cannot compete with the fairy world: there is not always a happy ending, no prince to save the princess from the dungeon. Indeed, far from telling 'the child how he can live with his conflicts [by suggesting] fantasies he could never invent for himself', as Bettelheim

claims (Bettelheim 1991: 111), Armitt's reading of the fairy tale suggests that they do not offer the child a solution but only the illusion of one. The child also realises that it has been deceived by the trusted adult who led it into the fairy world which falsely offers security. All this contributes to the child's uncanny reading experience.

2. The Paradox: on the Relationship between Reality and Fiction

Freud's discussion results in a paradox:

> The somewhat paradoxical result is that *in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life*.' (Freud 1997: 226; original emphases)

Freud then cites the fairy tale as an illustration of the proposition stated in the first part of the paradox, in that situations are encountered in a fairy tale which are 'un-uncanny' but which would be uncanny if encountered in reality. The reason for this, says Freud, is that fairy tales cannot provoke 'a conflict of judgement as to whether things which have been "surmounted" and are regarded as incredible may not, after all, be possible' (Freud 1997: 227). Although fairy tales cannot provoke this conflict of judgement, however, other types of fiction can; this does not necessarily mean that this conflict is always provoked but it could be, depending on the nature of the fiction and the terms of the 'poetic reality' set by the author; for example, the appearance of a ghost in fiction does not necessarily mean that the works will evoke a sense of the uncanny: the author may have imposed a poetic reality in which the appearance of ghosts or daemonic spirits is 'normal'; apparitions of this nature may be 'gloomy and terrible' as in, for example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but they are not uncanny, as Freud understands the term, so long as they remain consistent with the particular poetic reality of the work (Freud 1997: 227). If the author claims to be moving in the 'world of common reality', anything that in real life would have an uncanny effect will have the same effect in his story. However, the author can 'deceive' the reader by overstepping the norms of his poetic reality, which he has represented as being coterminous with actual reality; in other words, by introducing events which, in reality, could never happen or only very rarely, thus heightening his effect in a way that could not be achieved in reality. In effect, he 'deceives' the reader by not revealing the story's parameters until the last moment.[9]

Freud predicates his paradox on the proposition that the 'realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality-testing' (Freud 1997: 226), this

[9] Freud does, however, add that the reader's realisation that he has been tricked can leave him with a sense of dissatisfaction (Freud 1997: 227–28).

being the process by which we become convinced by ‘the material reality’ of a phenomenon in real life that seems to confirm the continued existence of old beliefs and superstitions which we thought had been surmounted (Freud 1997: 224-25). If this is true for literature in general, whether it provokes a sense of the uncanny or not, it must be true of that kind of literature whose poetic reality is far removed from actual reality, in particular, the fairy tale. However, the paradox encourages us to take a closer look at the relationship between fiction and reality.

Brooke-Rose’s and Hutcheon’s discussions of fiction and reality would include not only the fairy tale but also other stories that are seemingly unrelated to reality, and both authorities claim that fantasy and reality are interdependent: there is no fantasy without reality. Cornwell summarises their arguments, when he says:

> Brooke-Rose goes on to state (p. 81): ‘Obviously there is a realistic basis in all fantastic narrative, and even a fairy-tale will have some point of anchorage in the real, since the unreal can only seem so as against the real.’ For Hutcheon (1984, p. 77), ‘Fantasy is indeed the “other kind of realism”; and represents historically a parallel and equally valid literary tradition’; at the same time, though, even ‘the most extreme autonomous universes of fantasy are still referential, if they were not the reader could not imagine their existence.’ (Cornwell 1990: 25).

Unless we can compare fantastic elements to the real world, we cannot know that they are fantastic. The reader has to transpose the fictional characters and situations onto a realistic one and reflect on whether this could actually be happening in reality. But the deciding factor is not the answer to this question: what links the story to reality is the process of transferring it to and reflecting on it in a new, realistic setting. The fantastic would thus be defined as ‘less realistic’ rather than ‘not real’

In the light of Brooke-Rose’s and Hutcheon’s observations, Freud’s paradox needs to be re-examined. If, as Brooke-Rose and Hutcheon claim, all fiction is inevitably subjected to a degree of ‘reality testing’ by the reader/listener, the proposition upon which Freud bases his paradox, that the content of works of fiction is *not* subjected to reality testing, disappears; there is, therefore, no paradox. Fiction, by its very nature, will always be able to devise more opportunities for ‘creating uncanny effects [...] than there are in real life’ (Freud 1997: 226). While Freud argues that the question of uncanniness in fairy tales ‘is eliminated from the outset by the postulates of the world of fairy tales’ (Freud 1997: 227), it is precisely through reality-testing, which according to Freud would not even happen, that the presence or absence of the uncanny is discerned. It cannot necessarily be assumed that the further a poetic reality is seen to be removed from actual reality the more likely it is that the effect cannot be considered uncanny.

3. A Question of Genre: What is a Fairy Tale?

Freud speaks of the fairy tale as if its concept were clear to everyone. He even speaks of a ‘genuine fairy story’ (Freud 1997: 223) – unfortunately without sharing his understanding of it or why he appears to categorise stories such as ‘Snow White’ and Hebel’s ‘The Three Wishes’ as fairy tales but not E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story ‘The Sand-Man’. Armitt has no difficulty with this lack of a definition, maintaining that everyone knows what a fairy tale is but cannot describe it (Armitt 1996: 21). Maybe this is exactly Freud’s viewpoint: why explain something everyone knows? We grow up with fairy tales; they are often the first literary genre with which we are confronted in our lives. Of course, this raises the question whether there can be anything more familiar, anything better known to us than the fairy tale – but do we, as Armitt maintains is the case, really ‘know/sense/feel/intuit precisely what we mean when we use the term “fairy tale”’ (Armitt 1996: 21)? We can see what Freud means when he categorises ‘Snow White’ and Hebel’s ‘The Three Wishes’ as fairy tales but not E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story ‘The Sand-Man’: the first two depend for their effect on the fact that the reader suspends disbelief as regards their poetic reality and does not, therefore, subject their content to ‘reality testing’; the third one, however, appears to take place in ‘the world of common reality’ (Freud 1997: 226–27).

Certainly, when Nikolajeva distinguishes between the genre of the fairy tale and the genre of fantasy, positioning the fairy tale’s roots in society and myth (Nikolajeva 2000: 151-54), she uses similar criteria. The world of the fairy tale is a ‘magical world, detached from our own in both space and time’ which makes the story ‘mystical rather than realistic’ (Nikolajeva 2000: 152). ‘[R]eaders are not supposed to believe in the story’ as the hero has to do things that might not exist anyway in the real world and are impossible for *the reader to accomplish himself* (Nikolajeva 2000: 153). Nikolajeva thus places the reader of or listener to the story in the same position as that of the character in the story; this is demonstrated when she says that the protagonist (and the reader/listener) of a fairy tale experiences ‘no wonder when confronted with magical events or beings’ (Nikolajeva 2000: 154). This not only supports Freud’s distinction between the fairy tale, such as Hebel’s ‘The Three Wishes’, and other fiction which contains the fantastic, such as Hoffmann’s ‘The Sand-Man’, it also supports his view of the ‘un-uncanniness’ of fairy tales as being attributable to the fact that a fairy tale does not give rise to any conflict in the mind of the reader as to whether things which have been ‘surmounted and are regarded as incredible may not, after all, be possible’

(Freud 1997: 227); not only is there no conflict in the mind of the reader, there is clearly none in the mind of the protagonist.

Nikolajeva contrasts fantasy literature with this concept of the fairy tale. Fantasy is, she says, a conscious creation linked to modernity, with which the author pursues a specific aim. The characters found in fantasy literature are frequently, but not always, of the same kind as those found in the fairy tale, and here she makes reference to Vladimir Propp's work *Morphology of the Folktale*, but there is one essential difference between the two genres: the hero might fail (Nikolajeva 2000: 151). This, it is stressed, is the main feature of fantasy which distinguishes it from the fairy tale.

In the light of this, it would seem that Freud incorrectly categorises Hauff's 'The Story of the Severed Hand' as a fairy tale, as he appears to do when he says that that various phenomena encountered in fiction, including 'a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Hauff's [...] have something peculiarly uncanny about them' and continues that 'this kind of uncanniness springs from its proximity to the castration complex' (Freud 1997: 220). This seems to be at odds with his later statement that he 'cannot think of any *genuine* fairy story which has anything uncanny about it (Freud 1997: 223; added emphasis); is Hauff's tale, then, a fairy story that is 'not genuine'? But why did he need to create an exception to his own categories? Since Hauff's tale is set in reality, there seems to be no reason why it should not be placed in the same category as Hoffman's 'The Sand-Man'. If what distinguishes fantasy from the fairy tale is the link to reality, that is, if everything that happens can be explained *without* the intervention of magic and within the rules of the real world, this is clearly the case in Hauff's tale, as Freud himself provides a rational explanation for the tale's uncanniness. There seems to be no reason for not categorising 'The Story of the Severed Hand' within the genre of fantasy where the 'writer pretends to move in the world of common reality', as is the case with 'The Sand-Man'.

To Nikolajeva's and Freud's views on the fairy tale can be added those of other critics. Zipes, for example, identifies as the fairy tale's main feature the 'wondrous change'; by this he means that the fairy tale contains instances of phenomena described by him as 'supernatural occurrence[s]' which cause wonder or astonishment (Zipes 2000: xviii). Unlike Nikolajeva, who, by describing fantasy as a more modern phenomenon than the fairy tale, restricts the use of the term 'fairy tale' to stories emanating from the distant past, Zipes does not restrict the fairy tale to any particular period in the history of literature, so his criterion can be applied to both 'The Sand-Man' and 'The Story of the Severed Hand', on which basis

both would be fairy tales. If we then accept Freud's dictum that fairy tales are *never* uncanny, both 'The Sand-Man' and 'The Story of the Severed Hand' are thus not uncanny.

As we saw in the first section, Armitt considers the fairy tale to be, contrary to what Freud suggests, a place where things can be uncanny, in the sense that some elements of the tale could evoke a sense of the uncanny, and the child's uncanny reading experience results from its having been lured by a trusted adult into a world which seems to be comfortingly familiar, when it is nothing of the sort. Zipes, too, has developed the idea of the uncanny reading experience:

> [T]he very act of reading a fairy tale is an uncanny experience in that it separates the reader from the restrictions of reality from the onset and makes the repressed unfamiliar familiar once again. (Zipes 1985: 259)
>
> [O]nce we begin listening to or reading a fairy tale, there is estrangement and separation from a familiar world including an uncanny feeling which is both *frightening and comforting*. (Zipes 1991: 174; original emphases)

In one sense, the world of the fairy tale cannot be familiar, as the familiar is the world of reality – and the fairy world does not resemble reality; it is another world, unfamiliar and therefore frightening but, at the same time, comforting, as is suggested by the fact that the fairy tale, with its 'happy end', has long been considered suitable bedtime reading matter.[10] This creates the 'conflict of judgement' which, it will be remembered, Freud considers must be present in order for the reader to experience a sense of the uncanny.

Not unlike Nikolajeva, who, as we saw, places the reader of or listener to the story in the same position as that of the character in the story, Zipes stresses that the reader, whom he describes as being 'estrange[d] and separate[ed] from a familiar world' by the act of reading, identifies with and follows the dislocated protagonist in the latter's 'quest for home' — and Zipes takes pains to draw attention to the etymological connection between 'home' or '*Heimat*' and the terms '*unheimlich*' and *heimlich*' — a double journey, which takes place, first, in the reader's mind and, secondly, within the narrative itself, as the protagonist experiences the process of socialisation and acquisition of values (Zipes 1991: 174). This 'quest for home' is the setting which enables the reader to experience the uncanny (Zipes 1991: 175).

Zipes prefaces the passage quoted above with reference to Bettelheim's views concerning the 'therapeutic' role of the fairy tale; by being estranged from the real world, the

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[10] Zipes neither elaborates on the phrase 'frightening and comforting' nor explains why he emphasises it. He is possibly making an allusion, by the seeming oxymoron of 'an uncanny feeling which is [...] *comforting*' to the opposing definitions of *heimlich* which Freud identified and which I discussed in the Introduction.

child is made able to deal with deep-rooted psychological problems and anxiety-provoking incidents and so achieve autonomy. Zipes queries whether it is true, as Bettelheim appears to suggest, that the fairy tale can actually be therapeutic but does not deny that it can confront the reader or listener with a range of repressed infantile complexes and beliefs, as the next section will show.

4. 'Jack and the Beanstalk' – an Example

The British fairy tale 'Jack and the Beanstalk' shall serve here as an example to which the various critics' theories can be applied. As there are many different versions of this one story, I have chosen a more recent one published by Joseph Jacobs in his collection of *English Fairy Tales* (Jacobs 2004) in 1890; this includes the changes to the text which were made during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the result that Jack has become symbolic of an 'earthly Everybody' and the ogre of the 'geographically unlocalizable married oaf, reachable only by the magic of a bean' (Bottingheimer 2000: 267f). In this story Jack is sent off to sell his mother's cow. Instead of selling it, he trades the animal for three beans, given to him by an old man who claims that they are magical. His mother is angry with him and throws the beans out of the window; Jack is sent to bed without any supper. The beans are indeed magical: when Jack wakes up next morning, he finds that, during the night, the beans have sprouted and a beanstalk has grown up to the sky. When Jack climbs up the beanstalk he finds himself in another realm, which he proceeds to explore. He meets an ogre's wife, who is kind to him and even hides him in the hearth to save him from her man-eating husband. On his first visit, Jack steals a bag of gold, on the second, a hen that lays golden eggs and on the third and last visit, a singing golden harp. However, the harp wakes up the ogre at the moment it is being stolen. Jack quickly begins climbing down the beanstalk to escape, but the ogre follows Jack down the beanstalk to catch him. As soon as he reaches the ground, Jack calls to his mother to bring him an axe, so that he can chop down the beanstalk while the ogre is still on it and thus kill the ogre; this Jack indeed does. The story concludes by briefly relating that Jack and his mother become rich and Jack marries a great princess.

Freud does not see any link to reality and would, therefore, not consider the story to be in any way uncanny. The typical beginning, 'There was once upon a time […]' (Jacobs 2004: 69), immediately indicates that the reader or listener is dealing with a fairy tale and that everything that follows is detached from reality: there are no magic beans that grow overnight up into the sky, no boy could climb up into the sky and, of course, no ogre family would be living there. As none of this could exist in reality, the man-eating ogre of the story is,

therefore, not an uncanny figure. What complexes does Bettelheim find in this story and how might the theories of Armitt and Zipes be applied to it?

Bettelheim finds references to the oedipal complex in this fairy tale, the ogre being the father figure and his wife the oedipal mother (Bettelheim 1991: 187). According to Bettelheim, Jack's own mother does not appreciate his initiative in making a deal that, at least in Jack's eyes, is better, when he barters the cow for the magic beans rather than selling it for cash; she therefore fails to give him the approval that a young boy needs in order to develop from one stage to the next (Bettelheim 1991: 189).[11] As Jack cannot find support from his mother, he looks for a 'surrogate' mother to whom he can turn. Climbing up the beanstalk, he finds the ogre's wife, whose maternal role supplants that of his own mother when she gives him the shelter that Jack's mother has refused him. She, the ogre's wife, hides Jack twice in the hearth, which for Bettelheim is symbolic of her ability to provide a means whereby to gratify the longing Jack has to re-experience a safety like that of a mother's womb (Bettelheim 1991: 193), a longing which is emphasised when, on his third visit, Jack is not hidden by the ogre's wife but himself finds a hiding place in a large boiler. Since the ogre's wife has acquired the role of the mother, the ogre acquires that of the father and so becomes the oedipal father, the 'dreaded father' (Bettelheim 1991: 190), the father 'at whose hands castration is expected' (Freud 1997: 207), in contrast to the positive father figure of the old man who provided Jack with the beans (Bettelheim 1991: 188). The ogre is a man-eater, who threatens Jack's life, because Jack wants to possess the ogre's wife, as is made clear by the three scenes in which Jack steals objects belonging to the ogre: each object is more precious to the ogre than the one before; the most precious object to be stolen would be the ogre's wife. I would even go a step further than Bettelheim and argue that the fear spread by the ogre is actually the castration anxiety. In chopping down the beanstalk, the omnipresent phallus of this story, Jack frees himself from and overcomes his anxieties, most of all, the castration complex. However, Bettelheim does not find anything uncanny in the tale on the basis that the child who reads or listens to the story only understands subconsciously the message of the necessity of overcoming certain phases within one's development.

This leads to Armitt's view on fairy tales. As we saw, Armitt disagrees with Freud and maintains that the fairy tale is the place where things can be uncanny, a fact of which the adult who is reading this story to a child is aware but he/she nevertheless exposes the child to

[11] Freud identified five stages in human sexual development: the oral, the sadistic-anal, the phallic, the latency period and, finally, the genital. The oedipal complex is one of the traumas associated with the phallic phase.

it (1996: 45f.); he/she also knows that the fairy world is not as nice as it seems: a world is suggested that reality could never offer. If this concept is developed a little further, Armitt's point can arguably be applied not only to different worlds, such as that of the fairy tale when posited against the real world, but also to the phases through which, according to Bettelheim, the child passes as it develops and matures and the difficulties it has to overcome in the process, a process which is not as easy as the fairy tale encourages the child to believe. As well as magical objects such as beans from which a beanstalk grows up to the sky overnight, a harp that sings and a man-eating ogre, the tale contains familiar figures grounded in reality: the kindly old man with whom Jack makes the deal, the symbol, according to Bettelheim, of the 'good' father, and the ogre's wife who hides Jack in the oven in order to protect him; their counterparts are the ogre, seen by Bettelheim as the 'dreaded father' of the oedipal complex, and Jack's neglectful mother. Armitt, however, would see the tale as not so much about enabling the child to work through the oedipal complex as familiarising it with the figures who, in real life, can be identified as the providers of care and shelter, in this case, the old man and the ogre's wife. But, says Armitt, the child may be disappointed by real life and find itself failed by the familiar figures that it has identified as the providers of care and shelter; it may also find that it cannot expect any help as it tries to overcome the personal problems it encounters, for example, as it negotiates the transition from the oral to phallic phase of development. Armitt argues that, as the parent knows that the real world is much crueller than the world of fairy tale, he/she does not help the child by introducing it to this world, a world which seems, deceptively, to be familiar; this is what makes any fairy tale uncanny. Applying Armitt, 'Jack and the Beanstalk' is uncanny because it familiarises the child with a world in which help is always available, which in the real world is not always the case.

As we saw in the last section, Zipes advocates the concept of the uncanny reading experience, which focuses on the displacement of the reader from reality to a fairy tale world, an act which is in itself uncanny; in 'Jack and the Beanstalk', the phenomena of the gigantic beanstalk and the ogre family estrange us from our familiar and real world and introduce us to one which is new and unfamiliar. However, there is a further reason why, in Zipes' eyes, 'Jack and the Beanstalk' would be an uncanny fairy tale; I refer to his concept that the reader is further 'displaced' as he identifies with the hero, in this case Jack, and follows him on his 'quest for home' (Zipes 1991: 174). Zipes, who accepts Bettelheim's argument that the fairy tale is a vehicle for veiled allusions to diverse infantile complexes, would agree with Bettelheim's reading of this fairy tale in terms of the oedipal complex in which the oedipal

conflict has been transferred to Jack's surrogate ogre parents, whom he 'adopts' after being disappointed by his real mother. If, as Zipes claims, the adult reader identifies with Jack, he/she will also re-experience the oedipal conflict just as Jack experiences it; the reader will identify the ogre 'father' as a personification of his/her own father and the ogre's wife, whom, it is implied, Jack intends to steal, as his own 'loved' mother; therefore, following Freud's argument, a sense of the uncanny will be evoked when the reader re-lives his repressed childhood experiences on reading or re-reading the fairy tale.

5. Conclusion

One aim of this article has been to demonstrate where Freud situates the fairy tale in relation to, on the one hand, the uncanny and, on the other, fiction. His position is that, because it has no connection to reality, it is the only genre of fiction that can never have 'anything uncanny about it'; a fairy tale may well contain elements that, in another context, would evoke a sense of the uncanny, but in the fairy tale they do not. Everything in a fairy tale has nothing to do with real life, so anything is possible; the reader accepts this and therefore does not experience a sense of the uncanny as the result of anything he encounters in the fairy tale. The signal to the reader that this is the case is the typical beginning, 'Once upon a time ...'.

But what is a fairy tale? Freud himself does not define the genre and there is little in 'The Uncanny' to suggest that he had given much thought to the question, since he misuses the term by describing 'The Story of the Severed Hand' as 'a fairy tale of Hauff's' (Freud 1997: 222). Of the critics discussed in this article, Zipes is one of the few who offer a definition: in his view an essential element of the fairy tale is that it must contain what he terms a 'wondrous change' and that this 'wondrous change' is what distinguishes the fairy tale from 'other (modern) short literary genres' (Zipes 2000: xviii). This concept has interesting similarities to Ludwig Tieck's concept of the novella's essential element as being the *Wendepunkt*, the specific point on which the plot turns but a detailed discussion would be beyond the scope of this article.

Nevertheless, Freud clearly does make a distinction between the fairy tale and other genres of fiction, a distinction which other critics support. Nikolajeva, for example, who agrees with Freud on the distinction between fairy tales and other fictional texts, might be seen as supporting his argument categorising Hoffmann's 'The Sand-Man' as a genre other than that of the fairy tale. On the other hand, although Zipes' broader definition of the fairy tale would include 'The Sand-Man', he does not share Freud's view that the fairy tale is never uncanny. This is because Zipes adds another dimension to the idea of uncanniness: the

uncanny reading experience. He argues that the reader is displaced from reality and is, while he is reading the story, again confronted with infantile complexes, as, in his mind, the reader goes on the same quest as the protagonist.

However, Freud's supposition that there is no 'genuine fairy story which has anything uncanny about it' appears to be based on a restricted examination: having identified in real life many possible causes for experiencing a sense of the uncanny, he broadly categorises them, in the context of literature, into two classes: those which proceed from 'forms of thought that have been surmounted' and those which proceed 'from repressed [infantile] complexes'. (1997: 228). As has been demonstrated, he only gives examples of phenomena in a fairy tale that could, in real life, be explained in terms of the first category and fails to consider phenomena that proceed from the second. Bettelheim shows that fairy tales can indeed contain elements that allude to such complexes but is not concerned with considering the question whether either such elements are or their presence in the fairy tale makes it uncanny; he sees the fairy tale as, in the main, affecting the young reader by showing him that he has to overcome different phases in his adolescence in order to grow up.

'Jack and the Beanstalk' has been used as an example of a typical fairy tale with which to illustrate the arguments of not only Freud but also the other critics discussed in this article; indeed, I have demonstrated that, as far as Bettelheim's chapter on this particular fairy tale is concerned, it is evident that the tale contains more elements which could evoke a sense of the uncanny than those discussed by Bettelheim. He fails to make any mention of the castration anxiety, yet the ogre who tries to kill and devour Jack is certainly a symbol for the castrating father. While this would not alter Freud's understanding of the uncanny as it is found in fairy tales, it would contribute to that of both Armitt and Zipes, who would see this as making our example even more uncanny. However, it would then become necessary to consider at what point a sense of the uncanny becomes one of fear and redefine the uncanny accordingly, in order not to misinterpret the situation. A discussion of this would, however, take us into the field of psychology and psychoanalysis and too far from the aim of this literary analysis.

All these positions might seem to be partially contradictory, but are indeed not: no argument of these critics has the power to invalidate any of the other arguments or even Freud's points. No critic argues against Freud's concept of the uncanny, rather they each add another perspective. Again, the discussion of Freud's short chapter in 'The Uncanny' in which he considers fiction and the uncanny raised the more the more fundamental question of the relationship between fiction and reality, a question which also could not be fully

answered. But finding answers should not be our intention and is not the aim of this article: more important is the need to be constantly reflecting on each perspective, on different points of view.

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MISCELLANEA

Punctuation Today: A Qualitative Study[1]

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The focal idea of the research project on which this article reports originated from my personal and professional interest in language use and acquisition. After reading Hall's 'Young children's use of graphic punctuation' (2003), I decided to use similar research methods to study how people use punctuation later on in their lives. I interviewed individuals about their writing to examine their thought processes when punctuating and to obtain their perspectives on and opinions about punctuation, in order to address the following questions:[2]

1) On the 'general use' of punctuation in multimodal communication:
   i. How much do the participants in this study utilise or actively avoid using punctuation?
   ii. How do the participants think that punctuation applies to various literacy practices, including 'new literacies' such as emails and text messages?
   iii. What role or roles do the participants give to punctuation in different contexts? Do they think punctuation is useful and, if so, how?
   iv. How much do the participants know about punctuation and which punctuation marks do they habitually use?
   v. How do the participants apply this knowledge?
2) On punctuation and identity:
   To what extent and in what way does punctuation relate to the participants' identity construction?
3) As a follow-up research topic:
   i. Why do the participants avoid using punctuation and/or use what Hall calls 'unconventional punctuation', i.e. the 'use of conventional punctuation

[1] This article was first presented as a paper at the conference *The Evolution of Research: adapting to survive in a changing world* organised by the Post-Graduate Research Association and held at Canterbury Christ Church University on 17 June 2011.

[2] See data in the Appendices and findings in section 2.

marks where an experienced user of punctuation would least expect them' (Hall 2003: 73–78)?

ii. To what extent do people continue to use, as Hall suggests is the case, what he terms 'graphic punctuation', that is, 'the use of, or belief about the use of, punctuation which is dominated by the positioning of the marks on the page according to space rather than any underlying linguistic principles' (Hall 2003: 76)?

These questions were designed to allow this enquiry to test how different literacy-related themes might apply to the specific aspect of punctuation. The intention was to identify types of social (literacy) practices (Street 2003) with which the participants are involved and how the participants position themselves, in other words how they construct their identities in collaboration with others (Lillis 2003) through punctuation within these practices, while possibly comparing the participants' punctuating principles with those of the children in Hall's study.

Additionally, the qualitative/ethnographic approach adopted for this study not only directed the prioritisation of certain aspects over others[3] but also allowed further questions to emerge within the course of the study, including:

— The extent to which individuals' learning styles (auditory/visual) may be linked to their interpretation of the role of punctuation (prosodic/graphic).

— The effects of simplifying punctuation terminology in early education.

— International differences in punctuation rules, practices and teaching approaches.

The target group comprised eight participants: two GCSE students, two undergraduate students (respectively reading Modern Languages and Economics) and four professionals aged between 45–55 with higher educational backgrounds (a civil servant, a business manager, a restaurant owner and a graphic designer), all close friends or relatives of the researcher, at different stages of their lives and education, who take part in a variety of literacy practices: academic (essays, projects), professional (letters, reports), and/or casual (letters, messages).

All participants contributed by means of interviews and post-interview conversations with the researcher; two of them provided this study with a text they had written and took part in

[3] See findings in section 2.

individual 'talk around text' sessions (Freebody 2010; Hall 2003; Jaffe 2003), while the other six participants offered their comments on the punctuation in the two texts[4].

The data-collection took place in April–May 2010, in informal settings, i.e. the researcher's and the participants' own homes, as well as on the phone and via email. The sources of evidence comprised:

— Responses to interviews.
— Researcher's journal entries.
— Texts produced by two participants.
— Participants' punctuation work and comments.
— Notes taken during 'talk around text'.
— Relevant literature.

Because of the personal character of this research, the informal circumstances in which it was carried out, the absence of an overseeing body and the facts that the participants neither were mutual friends/colleagues nor had a stake in this project, precautions were taken to deal essentially with the following ethical issues:

— Minimising any inconvenience caused to the participants; interviews and 'talk around text' were carried out at a time and place to suit them, when and where they could talk freely with the researcher.
— Anonymity: the participants' names are not revealed.
— Privacy and consent: the participants' permission was obtained to use their texts and messages to capture data for the sole purpose of this study.
— Minors: parental consent was obtained regarding the participation of the two GCSE students.

Taking into account concerns with fairness, relevance and accuracy, I consciously avoided leading questions and I advised all participants that the outcome of the study depended on their honest answers. However, I am aware of the influence of my own 'subjectivity' (Lee 2003) on the information I obtained from the participants and on my interpretations and data analysis. Further, an awareness of my relationship with the participants guided me in taking precautions such as:

[4] For text extracts and a summary of comments from the participants, see Appendix 2.

— Being aware that a participant might more readily recognise colloquial terminology: calling parentheses ‘round brackets’ and ellipses ‘three dots’, for example.
— Providing a relaxed atmosphere.
— Approaching each question in different ways to make sure that the participants did not disguise their own views in an effort to try to please me with their answers.
— Being sensitive to the context in which their messages were expressed in order to capture the actual meaning they intended.
— Taking into account any stress or repetition of specific ideas.
— Taking note of any help required by and given to the participants.

1. Background information

1.1 The nature and purpose of punctuation

Punctuation is an essential element of writing and its use is, therefore, an element of literacy but it also needs to be acknowledged as ‘the marker of the relations of speech and writing’ (Kress 2003: 126), that is, as a semiotic resource, distinct from words, and therefore influenced differently by information technology in various practices.

Punctuation marks are individual symbols with the power to not only define textual meaning by marking pauses or signifying intonations, but also by adding rhythm, breath and life to a text. Without punctuation, a written text may be ambiguous:

My mum says my dad sometimes talks too much.

One might assume that the sentence above is a contraction of ‘My mum says *that* my dad talks too much’. However, the simple insertion of commas could change the entire meaning of this statement:

1) My mum, says my dad, sometimes talks too much.
2) My mum, says my dad sometimes, talks too much.

— In punctuated version 1): My dad says that my mum *sometimes* talks too much.
— In punctuated version 2): My dad *sometimes says* that my mum talks too much.

This example, which only makes use of the two most commonly used punctuation marks, the comma and the full stop, enables us to get a sense of the fundamental role of punctuation: ‘Punctuation is more important than spelling’ (King 2009: 1).

Taking into account the power of punctuation over texts, the purpose of which is to communicate meaning, punctuation use is an important issue that concerns a variety of 'literacy practices' (Carrington and Luke 1997; Street 2003) in a changing world. Yet, punctuation can be perceived as an obscure aspect of the English language, used inconsistently across literacy practices, even by the most literate adults.

1.2 Universal negligence?

> Despite the importance of punctuation in effective communication, there seems today to be a woeful indifference to and ignorance about using even its simplest forms. (King 2009: 1).

This argument, which could constitute a rationale for further research into punctuation, appears to lack empirical support. An initial search was conducted, which revealed little research literature into literate adults' everyday use of punctuation in the English language[5]; no evidence was found to have emanated from ethnographic studies exploring punctuation as a 'conventional' skill, applied to various literacy practices.

The use of the term 'literate' in this context is that adopted by Carrington and Luke, as well as Street, and is not intended to determine the overall social status of our participants but rather to denote people who use similar means of communication and share the same 'ground rules' (Mercer 2000) of the wider culture of their country, in this case the UK; the term 'literate adults' should, therefore, be understood to mean people past the age of puberty, able to read and write in English at the expected level for their age group.

This socio-cultural study explores how far its participants can exemplify and elucidate this apparent general neglect of punctuation and whether it may reflect approaches used for teaching punctuation in formal education. In his study, Hall argues that the children's teachers emphasise the graphic rather than the linguistic function of punctuation. Nevertheless, he also recognises that children operate differently from adults (Hall 2003: 73). Indeed, educators know that children do not comprehend abstract matters the way adults do: 'children (up to the age of about 11) are still in an intellectual stage of what Piaget called "concrete operations"' (Brown 2007: 102), 'codifying the outside world' (Perraudeau 1996: 68–78) and developing their spatial awareness (Steiner, in Houssaye 1995: 96–99); children 'have little appreciation of our adult

[5] Please refer to the *Further Reading*, '*On teaching punctuation*', '*On punctuation usage in languages other than English*' and '*On punctuation usage in information technology*', for existing research literature on punctuation teaching, punctuation in languages other English and punctuation use in information technology.

notions of "correctness"' and 'need to have all five senses stimulated' (Brown, ibid.); additionally, the development of children's 'metalinguistic awareness also includes the discovery of such things as ambiguity' (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 9). Therefore, a linguistic approach to punctuation with children would need to be adapted to such aspects of their learning and subjected to investigation. However, it would certainly appear that punctuating conventions are, if not often overlooked, at least rarely addressed in language teaching regardless of the learners' age or development stage. Punctuation rules are frequently quite vague, tending to communicate controversial ideas regarding linguistic functions and occasionally suggesting that the use of individual marks might, in certain cases, even be optional. As many grammar/reference books do, the *New Hart's Rules* describes 'situations where a number of styles are possible' (Ritter 2005: 63), for example, the debate around the use or non-use of the serial comma, i.e. whether or not there should be a comma before the final conjunction ('and', 'or' and, sometimes, 'nor') in a list of three or more items.[6]

I argue that, as is the case with literacy in its broad sense, there are two different conceptions of the function of punctuation marks. On the one hand, there is what Street defines as the 'autonomous' view or the 'conforming to the rules' function, which Hall refers to as 'conventional' punctuation use. On the other hand, there is a focus on punctuation as 'ideological' or punctuation in its social function, as it contributes to meaning-making in different ways and finds relations with status and power associated to different 'literacy practices' (Street 2003: 81) and different discourses (identity practice) within cultural systems. In the latter function, knowledge is not fixed but jointly constructed through language (Mercer 2000), evolving differently across practices, with time and with the use of new communication technologies.

1.3 Variation and evolution

An approach to teaching punctuation may, therefore, need to take into consideration the fact that some aspects of punctuation are 'open to variation and vary from writer to writer, and can change over time' (Seely 2009: 130):

Regarding punctuation inconsistency, Truss (2003: 1–34) refers to punctuation as a 'seventh sense'. So one may also ask to what extent it is even possible to teach punctuation. Additionally,

[6] This is also known as the 'Harvard' or 'Oxford' comma.

different punctuation rules in different languages may create confusion for users of more than one language. Although it was never within the scope of this project to address such questions directly, I expected that prioritising the exploration of people's perspectives, knowledge and use of punctuation would shed some light upon them. Literate adults often have their own relationships with particular punctuation marks: in a BBC news article, an American best-selling author and an American literary editor of *The Times* expressed their likes and dislikes and what they perceived to be the functions, style and status associated with the dash and the semi-colon (Shriver and Wagner 2009). Thus, the present study adopts a 'post-structuralist' theoretical position to examine punctuation in its subjectivity, in other words punctuation's variations from writer to writer in relation to the individual's identity construction, in the continuous process of making the self through meaning-making in contextual interactions. Exploring how punctuation is valued and how it possibly affects the participants' self-perception in different contexts and situations also involves considering the 'multimodal' aspect of modern communication (Kress 2003).

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore in detail either the history of punctuation or changes in the practice of punctuation over time. [7] It does, however, address more contemporary variations of its use in different multimodal literacy practices in people's modern daily lives, including those involving information technologies,[8] and examines Matchett's suggestion that 'perhaps the icons we use in emails and text messages, such as :-) [emoticons], might in the future become accepted punctuation marks' (2009: 30).

Furthermore, the development of punctuation throughout the lives and learning processes of individuals is addressed. This research on young and middle-aged adults' use of punctuation was inspired by Hall's study and his conclusive argument that 'while the principles of graphic punctuation is a temporary phenomenon for many children, it can persist for an unnecessarily long and unhelpful period of time' (Hall 2003: 77). In order to determine the extent to which this

[7] For example, the question mark, ?, developed from a letter 'q', an abbreviation of the Latin *quaestio* (question) which was used by scribes to indicate that a phrase was to be given the intonation of a question in an age when texts were more likely to be read aloud than silently (Matchett 2009: 30). Please refer to *Further Reading* '*On the history of punctuation*' for existing research literature on the history of punctuation.

[8] Please refer to *Further Reading* '*On punctuation usage in information technology*' for existing research literature on information technology and punctuation usage.

statement is true, responses were sought from the focus group, regarding the individuals' principles underlying their use of punctuation[9].

2. Discussion of findings

The analysis of data led to findings which fall under the six headings in this section.[10]

2.1 Situation and Culture.

Situation encompasses three concepts: *field* — the different literacies associated with different domains of life; *tenor* — the relationship the writer has with the reader; and *mode* — the nature and form of the text itself.

All participants were consistent in that, with regard to *field*, they said that they employed English punctuation more generously and carefully in fields that were academic and work-related and that, with regard to *tenor*, this was an even greater influence on their use of punctuation. This was an especially significant issue for the student-participants, whose written work reflected asymmetrical power relationships between them and their readers: their teachers or tutors.

The affect of *tenor* on people's attitude towards punctuation is illustrated by comparing the attitudes of Ellen and Brian to their texts: despite Ellen's essay being only a draft[11] on which she was still intending to work, and Brian's email being a final text[12] which he had already sent to his recipient, Brian's attitude was more relaxed: 'In emails, I tend to be quick and not careful'[13]. The main reason for Brian's lack of concern about using punctuation adequately was expressed in his further comment: 'I don't feel hindered because the people I deal with would not know how to use [punctuation] either',[14] an attitude that can be contrasted with that of Diana, who thought that punctuation was 'hindering if it shows a lack of education' [15].

However, wider than the context of situation is the context of *culture* (Butt & al. 2000). One of my interview questions was formulated after Marie commented that the difference between French and English punctuation affected her punctuation use in both languages: she thought that the differences in punctuation habits between the two cultures were linked with the differences

9 See data in Appendix 2 and findings in section 2.5.
10 See extracts and summaries in Appendices.
11 See Appendix 2, Data Extract 1.
12 See Appendix 2, Data Extract 2.
13 Talk around text entry in research journal.
14 See Appendix 1, Question 8.
15 See Appendix 1, Question 8.

between the French and the English educational approaches.[16] Formerly educated in the French system, she experienced the English system through the education of her three children in the UK. Her observations were that, whereas the French approach operated from reliable rules to texts, the English approach used texts to identify language aspects in context. She also noticed that the grammatical terminology taught in English schools was more basic than the French and simplified to indicate functional aspects, for example, the practice of calling adjectives and adverbs 'describing words' or commas and full-stops 'pauses'. Pat, who writes regularly in French, Spanish and English, expressed the view that more punctuation is needed in French and Spanish writing, where formality calls for longer, more elaborate, complex sentences, than in English writing, where it is preferable to keep all sentences short and straightforward.[17] Therefore, although all Latin-scripted languages share the same punctuation marks, the different cultures, habits, ideologies, rules, intonations, etc. associated with these languages affect punctuation use.

2.2 Identity and social practice

The above comments are also good illustrations of *identity* being constructed in relation to others (Ivanič 1998) and of the 'social perspective' of language supported by Mercer, who draws on the Vygotskian theory about 'the relationship between language and thought and between individual and society' (Mercer 2000: 9) to introduce the notion of 'communities of practice' that are 'typified by roles and ground rules that govern members' behaviour' (Ibid: 116–17). They demonstrate that a writer's motivation to punctuate depends more on the writer's conception of the reader's requirements than on textual modality. Although all four professionals said that they 'only ever [wrote] emails', this 'new communication order' (Snyder 2003) had more implications for Brian's literacy practice. For him, it was 'just an email' and his reader would understand his message, regardless of punctuation. His perception of an email corresponded to Mercer's description of this asynchronous form of computer mediated communication, which serves to perform rapid problem solving, and represents a 'clumsy medium, one in which people try to do talk-like things but without the auxiliary systems of gesture and tone of voice for conveying emotions and subtle meaning' (Mercer 2000: 125–28). In contrast, the three other professionals agreed that a work email is still a formal letter, requiring 'proper punctuation'. While

[16] Informal discussion, recorded in research journal.
[17] Informal discussion, recorded in research journal.

exemplifying different *literate mentalities* (Olson 2003), these different perspectives also illustrate the individuals' *choice*, influenced by their aspirations, in the construction of their 'constantly negotiated' identities, within different *communities of practice* (Bucholtz 2003).

The participants' confidence in using certain marks was not exclusively related to the depth of their knowledge of punctuation conventions. The relationship between their knowledge of punctuation terms and functions, and their use of punctuation is illustrated as follows:

Use > Knowledge of functions > Knowledge of terminology.

This signifies that the amount of punctuation use is greater than the knowledge of functions, which in turn is greater than the knowledge of terminology.

My closeness to the participants allowed me to notice that the individual's balance of their expressed feelings of empowerment and concern associated with punctuation was in line with what I perceived to be their *identity*, i.e. their temporary positioning in the world: participants in asymmetrical relationships, i.e. younger participants and/or those with less assertive personalities, experienced hindrance.

The idea that punctuation is a 'formal', 'standard', 'official' tool that loses its status in modern speech-like instant communication was unanimous, despite its role in relating speech and writing. Because of its literary and semiotic nature, punctuation is subjected to evolutionary language changes on different levels:

> The multiple and often contradictory logics of multimodal text can be explained plausibly and satisfactorily only by bringing them into an integral relation with the logics of other social cultural systems. (Kress 2003: 123)

Although the two texts selected, a GCSE student's school essay and a professional's work email, provided a good comparison of the same type of misuse of punctuation marks (comma, dash, colon, full stop), they were governed by various socio-cultural aspects and needed to be identified differently in terms of:

— Literacy practices (Street 2003).

— Functions/social purposes (Halliday 1994; his genre theory).

— Degrees of formality: in his business email, Brian's informal mode of address, simply the use of his recipient's first name, suggests a certain familiarity with the reader, allowing a lesser degree of formality and an increased autonomy of style.

- Positions in power relationships: in Ellen's essay, punctuation is one of the evaluation and marking criteria.
- Modalities (the perceived ground rules in any communication channel), with emails representing 'a new communication order' (Snyder 2003).
- Channels (the nature of the passage of communication: essay/email).
- Mediums (the form of the passage of communication: paper/screen).

Brian benefited from a certain 'design' freedom (Kress et al. 1998), whereas Ellen responded to academic requirements limited to competence and critique.

2.3 Conventions

Many of the corrections in the texts identified by the participants acting as correctors are supported by some kind of authority;[18] this suggests that internalised rules constitute a large part of 'instinctive punctuation'. However, not only were some necessary corrections not spotted but some participants suggested a 'correction' where none was required, in other words, suggesting a punctuating use that would be 'unconventional'. The following factors might explain these phenomena.

- All the participants claimed that they did not consciously know or rely on precise punctuation rules and that this was, they believed, the case for most people.
- Most participants felt that punctuation rules offered a certain margin of freedom and creativity.
- Confusion could arise because different punctuation rules can be obtained from different reference books.[19]
- There are actual differences between British punctuation usage and US usage.[20]
- Some usages are not prescriptive rules, as such, but flexible conventions which can be applied at the writer's discretion, so long as the writer does so consistently:[21]

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[18] See Appendix 2.

[19] For example, some suggest that a semi-colon should only be used to separate clauses that could stand alone as sentences in their own right (Seely 2009: 140; Swan 1998: 459; Ritter 2005: 72), while others suggest that the semi-colon may also separate grammatically dependent clauses (King 2009: p.60; Truss 2003: 114).

[20] For example, the practice of the serial comma referred to earlier is standard in US English but is less common in British English.

[21] For example, there is no rule of punctuation which dictates that quotations running on with the main text must be enclosed within single inverted commas; double inverted commas may also be used for this purpose: Appendix 2, correction 9.

— Some rules cannot be stated simply, because the correct use of the punctuation mark in question depends on a number of factors.[22]

— In some case, different ways of punctuating could all be equally correct.[23]

— Whether or not a particular rule applies can depend on the context, which will not necessarily be known to the reader.[24]

— The use of punctuation sometimes depends on the relationship between the writer and the 'voice' of the text (Maybin 2003, pp.160-161, Kamberelis 1992: 359–403); i.e. whether or not the text 'voices' the author's or someone else's words.[25]

— The use of punctuation can be influenced by an awareness of the prosody of the text: the writer/reader is conscious of the natural rhythms, cadences and pauses of the text and common sense prevails over a strict application of punctuation rules.[26]

— Different punctuation rules apply in different languages, which can be confusing for writers of more than one language.[27]

2.4 Creativity

Elements of *choice* represent the 'critical aspect of language' (Wallace 2003), and the individual's ability to use humanistic interpretation, an idea communicated by Street (2003) from an anthropological perspective. Choice was expressed by various participants, in terms of:

- *Preference*: I don't use the semi-colon; I just don't need it — the full stop's easier.
- *Taste*: I just don't like them.
- *Risk*: I'm not sure how we're supposed to use them, but I use them anyway — I live life on the edge! (laughs).

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[22] For example, the rule that a list should be preceded by a colon does not apply if the list has its own function within the syntax of the sentence: Appendix 2, correction 5.

[23] For example, either a full stop or a semi-colon can be used to separate main clauses; a comment or aside can be enclosed either in commas, parentheses or dashes: Appendix 2, corrections 10, 18.

[24] For example, it may not be possible to decide simply from the context whether a relative clause is 'restrictive', (i.e. identifies the antecedent substantive that it qualifies) or 'non-restrictive' (i.e. merely adds further information about the antecedent substantive that it qualifies); only the second type of clause is separated off from the main clause by a comma: Appendix 2, correction 4.

[25] See, for example, Appendix 2, correction 13, where the punctuation that should be used depends on whether 'something royal' is the writer's own voice or that of Wordsworth.

[26] For example, on a number of occasions, the correctors gave as their reason for inserting a comma that it was 'to mark a pause', but in each case, the punctuation suggested was inappropriate: Appendix 2, corrections 4, 11, 16.

[27] For example, in French, a comma may be used before a co-ordinating conjunction to stress semantic opposition and the sentence's forceful tone, e.g.: *Non seulement il n'aide pas, mais, en plus, il se plaint* [Not only is he unhelpful but he also complains]; as can be seen from the English version, this flexibility is not available in English.

- *Aesthetic*: When it looks right.
- *Design* – in informal writing only: The three dots (ellipses) allow leaving something out that is interpretable, something nondescript that can mean different things from person to person.[28]

The notion of *design,* frequently used in research into multimodal texts, adds another dimension to the writer's flexibility, as it represents the liberty taken by the writer to rely on the creativity of the reader. It suggests that a punctuation mark is a meaning-making image, placed in specific ways in relation to the text; for example, the multimodal texts of the Kashinawá people of Brazil use meaning-making images, as described by De Souza (2003): in Western writing, such a practice only features in informal texts, as is elaborated in the discussion of emoticons and punctuation used alone in 2.6.

2.5 Graphicness and prosody

The roles of formal punctuation were associated with two main attributes:

1- The *prosodic* aspect (linked with the aural sense, the tone, rhythm and pauses in a text), having a semantic (meaning-making) effect: 'audible pauses', 'to make sense', 'to help understanding'.[29]
2- The *graphic* aspect (linked with the visual sense, the appearance of texts and sentences), having a syntactic (structuring) effect: 'to separate sentences', 'to make it easier to read'.[30]

Amongst the focus group, not only did the phenomenon of prosodic punctuation override the graphic phenomenon but it also proved to be more helpful in semantic/linguistic terms.

I question for what reason other than for grouping all 'graphic' symbols together, the hyphen and apostrophe (which are not punctuation marks) often figure under the punctuation section of grammar books — most participants showed uncertainty regarding the roles of these two symbols.

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[28] Researcher's journal entries. Please note that when the context does not necessitate the use of pseudonyms, some participants' comments are quoted anonymously (see participants' accounts in Appendix 1).
[29] Researcher's journal entries.
[30] Researcher's journal entries.

Furthermore, although the *appearance* of certain marks seemed to create terminological confusion for some participants, this phenomenon is not the 'graphic phenomenon' described by Hall, which relates to the appearance of *text*.

2.6 Emoticons

Controversial points of views were expressed on the question of whether or not emoticons could ever be considered punctuation devices. In his explanation of why they could not, Rick recognised a contradiction,[31] through which he expressed *resistance* (Bucholtz 2003):

— Rick: I hate emoticons; they're annoying; they are separate from text; they stand alone; they add another meaning. Punctuation is not separate from text; it reinforces text.

— Researcher: Did you say they add meaning to text?

— Rick: Yes.

— Researcher: Do they clarify the text then?

— Rick: Yes (pause), I'm contradicting myself — that's what I said about the role of punctuation, isn't it? I just don't like emoticons.

(Interview extract: Researcher = interviewer, Rick = interviewee)

Although all symbols play a role in meaning-making, traditional punctuation constitute the message, whereas emoticons, as well as punctuation used alone, belong to the context. For example, ellipses are used formally to indicate a part of text left out of a quotation, and informally to rely on the reader's interpretation. But as Liz[32] pointed out, emoticons do not provide this same *design* opportunity, which a punctuation mark used alone can. The question mark used alone can mean 'what?', 'what are you talking about?', or 'I don't understand'; used in conjunction with an exclamation mark, sometimes repeated (!?!?), it can express simultaneous surprise and lack of understanding, possibly meaning: 'I can't believe it!' or 'that's not like you!'

Emoticons were attributed, as their name indicates, the role of expressing the emotion of the writer. Both punctuation marks used alone and emoticons were identified as unconventional/informal, separate from the text structure, and linked to context; but the general agreement was that their use in some communication modes does not affect the use and function

[31] Professional participant; see summary in Appendix 1, Question 7.

[32] GCSE student participant; see summary in Appendix 1, Question 7.

of punctuation in formal writing, even when such writing is technologically mediated. Macro- and micro-culture, field and tenor were agreed to affect punctuation types more than the channel.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Implications

My discussion of the findings shows that punctuation is a skill that is dynamic rather than abstract and one which cannot be acquired independently of the socio-cultural experience in which it is used; these facts support the preference for the 'ideological' over the 'autonomous' literacy model. Punctuation use is 'subjective' (Bahktin, in Burcholtz 2003; Kress et al. 1998; Maybin 2003); it varies across contexts, through each individual's involvement with others and is affected by power relations (Carrington and Luke 1997); it is subject to the individual's 'critical interpretation' (Wallace 2003) and 'design' (Kress et al. 1998), and thus has a role in shaping identities.

As is typical when studying aspects of people's everyday lives, this report reveals many conflicts and contradictions, associated with the complex nature of punctuation. On the one hand, it is a writing device, related to grammar in meaning-making, governed by rules and conventions, and yet striking in its complexity (compared, for example, with spelling systems) and in its flexibility (punctuation rules and styles vary, along with the writers' indulgence and the readers' lenience). On the other hand, it is also a semiotic device (Kress et al. 1998: 107) relating speech and writing (but paradoxically finding less use in the most instant, speech-like texts), trivial in certain contexts (of formality levels or channels), or communicating mysterious meanings (design dependence).

By revealing the effects of multi-literacies, multimodality and individual styles over punctuation, this project has educational implications. It confirms the need to acknowledge such effects on language in general and to question the wider applicability and suitability of our socio-culturally grounded educational expectations. Indeed, 'school literacy' is only one constituent of an individual's capital resources (Carrington and Luke 1997); academic literacy and work or everyday literacy are associated with particular aspects of cultural life; therefore 'teaching […] has to be able to take account of the variation in literacy practices amongst students' (Street 2003: 85).

Although the study of eight cases does not provide the opportunity to draw generalisations about adults' punctuation use, it participates in research advancement within the field by revealing contextualised, relevant aspects of punctuation in people's lives, by providing empirical data and generating ideas regarding:

— Punctuation use, function, and terminology.
— The prosodic/graphic roles of punctuation as semantic/syntactic resources.
— The subjectivity of punctuation, due to factors of context, power relations, identity, ideologies, contradictions, creativity, design and evolution.

3.2 Suggestions for further research

The limitations of such a small-scale enquiry are that, although the findings expose major themes, they can only be subjective and exploratory at this stage, and that the conclusions drawn from the findings can, therefore, only be tentative. In particular, Hall's claim that the graphic phenomenon 'can persist for an unnecessarily long and unhelpful period of time' (Hall, 2003: 77) is not supported by my findings and would require further evidence.

In terms of expansion, another study could be undertaken involving children before puberty, with the aim of observing the extent to which the phenomenon of graphic punctuation 'can persist', and to explore if and at what stage a switch might happen from that graphic phenomenon to the prosodic/graphic roles given to punctuation in the present study. I would also like to investigate whether these prosodic/graphic interpretations correspond to the individuals' auditory/visual learning styles and preferences.

Additionally, I suggest that the long-term benefits of simplifying grammatical and punctuation terminology as a way to aid acquisition should be further explored. It would be relevant to question if linguistic and conceptual 'simplifications' in a teacher's *discourse* (Hicks 2003) are strategically adapted to the learners' abilities and realities, effectively taking advantage of the 'third space', a rich zone of collaboration and learning, similar to Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (Gutiérrez et al. 2003), drawing on resources of 'common knowledge', providing scaffolding for learning (Mercer 2000: 139; after Vygotsky) and/or encouraging young learners to engage critically (Wallace: 2003).

Finally, an enquiry into the differences in punctuation rules, practices and teaching approaches between diverse Latin scripted languages would be helpful. In addition to the

comments made in this study on this subject, I have noted the confusion that can be experienced by writers of German, who tend to apply the German rule of punctuation that requires a comma to separate all grammatical units inappropriately to all other languages. I speculate whether literate Anglophones, probably equally affected by their English punctuating systems when writing in other languages, would benefit from a teaching approach that would both emphasise standard grammatical punctuation 'conventions' and recognise variations of styles across practices and cultures.

Appendix 1: Table of participants' accounts, summary of data obtained from interviews and further conversations[33]

key words in bold; parentheses contain researcher's notes**;**
participants' ID codes: S=Student, GCSE=General Certificate of Education, UG=Undergraduate, Prof=Professional.

Participants & ID codes	**Questions**
	1. How much use of punctuation do you make in your everyday writing; and in what situation or in which type of writing do you use punctuation the most?
Liz (S/GCSE)	Some; mostly in **schoolwork**.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	A lot; in **essays**.
Lewis (S/UG)	Some; more in **academic writing**, less in emails and text where I'm more lazy.
Pat (S/UG)	A lot; in **essays**, and emails, but less in text – it depends who I write to.
Brian (Prof)	Some; **formal letters**.
Marie (Prof)	A lot; in my **work emails** – formal and informal – and in attached reports, but less in English than in French.
Diana (Prof)	A lot; in **work letters and emails** – these require use of punctuation, formal and informal. I find it hard not to use punctuation – my daughters laugh at me for using it in mobile text messages.
Rick (Prof)	A lot; I always use it but I'm more assiduous in **formal writing**. I use a limited variety in mobile text messages and informal writing.
	2. How important is punctuation for writing and reading; what is its role?
Liz (S/GCSE)	Not very important; it changes the **sound**, makes things read more easily (prosodic)
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Very important; it changes meaning and structures sentences (meaning, grammar/functional)
Lewis (S/UG)	Very; it is the foundation of language, translates **speech** into writing, and has a universal standard, helps both with tone and sentence organisation, but overall, more with **tone** (prosodic, functional)
Pat (S/UG)	Very important; it changes meaning, helps understand written language, with **intonation** (meaning, prosodic)
Brian (Prof)	Very; it allows you to be precise about you mean, and to be read with the right tone (meaning, prosodic)

[33] The author expresses her thanks to the participants, without whose co-operation this study would not have been possible.

Marie (Prof)	Very; it helps meaning and text structure, makes text **visually** clear to help meaning. "I'm a very visual person" (meaning, functional, visual/graphic)
Diana (Prof)	Very; punctuation and grammar make a text correct. It helps meaning, sense making, and **visual** order (functional, meaning, visual/graphic)
Rick (Prof)	Very; it clarifies meaning, register emotions (!), **intonation** and feelings (meaning, prosodic)
	3. How did you learn to use punctuation; is it different in other languages?
Liz (S/GCSE)	At school, we had to punctuate unpunctuated texts or correct punctuation in other texts. I have not learnt since and **I still don't know** how to use some marks; just the Spanish question mark is different – a different way of doing the same thing.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Since Year 4 and **I'm still learning it**; I use the same punctuation in French and English. I have noticed that some emoticons are different in French (: and ^^.
Lewis (S/UG)	First at school and now, when I read. But when I write, it's more **intuitive**, what seems right, not so much by rules; no, French accents are not punctuation, and the Spanish question mark is just a different way of doing the same thing.
Pat (S/UG)	At school, and then it developed as **common sense**; French and Spanish make more use of punctuation and therefore in these languages, it is more common to see long written sentences, which in English would be qualified as run-on sentences and frowned upon. In English, short sentences are more formal; in French and Spanish, long sentences are more skilful, more formal. My knowledge of punctuation in these other languages makes me understand punctuation in English better.
Brian (Prof)	At school, but I can't remember because **I wasn't very interested**; I don't know about other languages.
Marie (Prof)	I learnt French punctuation at school and **English non-punctuation** in higher education. English punctuation is different to French as there's a lot less of it, especially less commas and semi-colons. English people don't appear to know how to use punctuation; for them grammar rules are less important. English language is more about use, so people can be creative. The teaching approach is different. French rules don't apply to English punctuation.
Diana (Prof)	At school, I learnt some rules but I then developed it as **an instinct**, with practice of reading and writing letters. You would not go far with just rules, you have to know whether a punctuation mark is right in given sentence, and you can't explain that.
Rick (Prof)	I learnt the basics at school, and then refined my knowledge professionally (TEFL course).
	4. Which punctuation marks do you not use (in parentheses); and which ones are you absolutely confident with (underlined)?
Liz (S/GCSE)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, single quotation marks, round brackets, slash, dash, hyphen, apostrophe.

Ellen (S/GCSE)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, single quotation marks, round brackets, slash, (dash), (hyphen), apostrophe. Ellipses used only in CMC and text messages to make sentence sound like spoken language.
Lewis (S/UG)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, single quotation marks, round brackets, slash, (dash), hyphen, apostrophe.
Pat (S/UG)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, single quotation mark, round brackets, slash, dash, hyphen, apostrophe.
Brian (Prof)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, (ellipses), comma, (semicolon), (colon), (double quotation marks), (single quotation marks), round brackets, (slash), (dash), (hyphen), apostrophe.
Marie (Prof)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses in less formal emails, comma, (semicolon), colon, double quotation marks, single quotation marks, round brackets, slash, dash, hyphen, apostrophe.
Diana (Prof)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, (single quotation marks), round brackets, slash, dash (only in the sort-codes on the computer at work), (hyphen), apostrophe.
Rick (Prof)	Full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses (not in formal), comma, semicolon, colon, double quotation marks, single quotation marks, round brackets, slash, dash, hyphen, apostrophe.
	5. Do you not use some punctuation because you are not sure how?
Liz (S/GCSE)	**The opposite**, I use punctuation even though I'm not sure I'm using it right.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Some yes, I would not know how to use ellipses in essays, or the dash.
Lewis (S/UG)	Yes, the dash.
Pat (S/UG)	**No**, I use them anyway, I live life on the edge.
Brian (Prof)	Yes, many I don't use, **I don't need to**.
Marie (Prof)	**No**.
Diana (Prof)	Yes, because **I don't need them**. I also use some I'm unsure of: I use the computer's writing help.
Rick (Prof)	**No**. I assume I make mistakes.
	6. Do you consider the hyphen and the apostrophe to be punctuation devices?
Liz (S/GCSE)	The apostrophe, yes. Not the **Hyphen** – it serves to link words.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Yes, they have the same role as punctuation, they change meaning.
Lewis (S/UG)	Yes they part of words but they are just as important.
Pat (S/UG)	Yes, they both change meaning too.

Brian (Prof)	Yes, they help understand meaning.
Marie (Prof)	**No**, they are part of word construction, not sentence construction.
Diana (Prof)	The apostrophe, yes, because it changes words meanings indicating possession or an abbreviation; but not the **hyphen**, it's word spelling.
Rick (Prof)	I'm not sure about the apostrophe, but the **hyphen** is a spelling device – not punctuation.
	7. Are/could emoticons become punctuation devices; and why?
Liz (S/GCSE)	They are not proper English but they could become punctuation because they make things **sound** different.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Yes, they change meaning, show feelings and how things are meant.
Lewis (S/UG)	No, they are too modern. They **don't convey tone** but feeling/mood. They brake the flow of the reading, they are distracting. They distract the reader's interpretation (anti-design) They banalise text.
Pat (S/UG)	No, they are not official; they are just **aesthetic**; restricted to informal writing, short speech-like forms, incomplete sentences; they replace writing.
Brian (Prof)	No, they are a modern piece of **pop art**, expressing mood, they are not punctuation.
Marie (Prof)	No, although they are made of punctuation **symbols**, they are not punctuation because they stand on their own, they don't need words. Their purpose is to imitate oral speech.
Diana (Prof)	No, they are informal, unofficial and not part of the English language.
Rick (Prof)	No; they are annoying, I don't like them, they are just **graphic** symbols, not part of the text. Symbols are not punctuation when used separately from text. Whereas punctuation reinforces text, emoticons add another line to your text. They have a meaning on their own.
	8. Do you feel hindered or empowered by the use of punctuation?
Liz (S/GCSE)	**Both**. It helps express myself better but I always get corrected with the semicolon for example.
Ellen (S/GCSE)	Only **empowered** in social writing but both hindered and empowered in school work.
Lewis (S/UG)	**Empowered** because they are necessary and because of the diversity of punctuation marks available which helps people express themselves better.
Pat (S/UG)	Generally **empowered** because it helps express myself better.

Brian (Prof)	Neither, it's **just useful**. I don't feel hindered because the people I deal with (his readers) would not know how to use it either.
Marie (Prof)	Only **empowered**; it enables me to formulate a message, to say what I want to say. I use punctuation because I need it, for the effect it has on what you say.
Diana (Prof)	'Empowered' might be too strong, punctuation is a good tool but it's hindering if it shows a lack of education. Because using punctuation is so instinctive, there is always a little **doubt**.
Rick (Prof)	Only **empowered**.

Appendix 2: Extracts of two participants' texts and summary of comments

In the two texts that follow, the analyses and bold type indicates corrections which, if made, would be instances of 'unconventional punctuation' as defined by Hall.[49]

Data Extract 1: Ellen's Essay

Both poets **(1)** William Wordsworth and William Blake **(2)** decided to portray the city of London in their poems **(3)** 'Westminster Bridge' and 'London'. The poems show many similarities **(4)** through **(5)** the figurative language, imagery, rhythm, and structure the poets both use. [Nevertheless], [50]they do manipulate these in their own way (6) in order to convey their passionate feelings about London. […]

Wordsworth and Blake are both romantic poets, which is important to take into account when analyzing both poems. It is clear to see (7) that they both express their feelings about London passionately through their poems. [...]

He refers to London as **(8)** 'a sight so touching in its majesty' **(9)** (10) This suggests that Wordsworth is so impressed by its beauty **(11)** that he refers to it as majestic, (12) (13) something royal. [...]

'Blights' and 'plagues' are both words with hard consonant sounds **(14)** which help express the anger he is trying to convey. [...]

[49] That is, the use of conventional punctuation marks where an experienced user of punctuation would least expect them (Hall 2003: 73–78).

[50] The text received from Ellen originally said '[t]hough, they do manipulate [...]'. The text was amended, after Ellen explained that she had intended to write 'nevertheless, they do manipulate [...]' but overlooked making the alteration. The correctors only saw the amended version.

No.	Add	Remove	Correctors	Ellen's comments
1	**Comma**		5	should there be a comma or colon here or something, don't know
2	**Comma**		1	yes, with like a closing comma here
3	**Colon or comma**		**4**	nope, nothing here
4	**Comma**		**2**	
5	**Colon**		**1**	
6.	**Comma**		**4**	definitely a comma here — because there's a change of ideas
7		Comma	5	should not be a comma here — don't know why, not needed
8	**Colon**		**1**	maybe something here? Don't know what should be used before a quote
9	Double inverted commas	Single inverted commas	**2**	
10	Full stop (or semi-colon)		6	full stop here, I just forgot
11	**Comma**		**1**	
12	Add single inverted commas		0	
13	'and'	Comma	1	I put a comma here to separate and make sense
14	Comma		3	comma missing here, to make sense when reading it

TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF CORRECTIONS —DATA EXTRACT 1

		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	7	**8**	9	10	**11**	12	13	14
Liz	S/GCSE	x		x	x		x	x	x		x				
Lewis	S/UG	x		x			x	x			x				x
Pat	S/UG	x		x				x		x	x			x	
Marie	Prof	x	x				x	x			x				
Diana	Prof	x			x			x		x	x				x
Rick	Prof			x		x	x				x	x			x

TABLE 2: ANALYSIS OF CORRECTORS — DATA EXTRACT 1

Notes:

(1) & (2) One corrector suggested the addition of a comma both before and after the noun phrase ‘William Wordsworth and William Blake’, which is in apposition to the preceding noun phrase ‘[b]oth poets’; four correctors suggested a comma before, but not after the phrase. An appositional phrase is enclosed in commas if it *adds extra information* about the first one (a non-restrictive appositional phrase) but not if it *identifies* the first one (a restrictive appositional phrase (Eastwood 1994: 14). In the context, the appositional phrase *identifies* the preceding noun phrase, so *no* commas are necessary, either before or after it. It is possible that the punctuation of the four correctors who inserted a comma *before* the phrase but not *after* was suggested by prosody, a pause being ‘audible’ before ‘William Wordsworth’ but less so after ‘Blake’.

(3) Four correctors suggested that the titles of the poems should be preceded by either a colon or by comma (the titles being in this case treated as non-restrictive appositional phrases). However, neither a colon nor a comma would be usual in academic writing: titles of complete works are usually put in italics, without single inverted commas, and parts of works, such as poem titles and short stories in collections in roman and enclosed in inverted commas (see, for example, *MHRA* 2008: 41–46; 54).

(4) Two correctors suggested that a comma was required before ‘through’ to mark a pause, but this would be incorrect: the phrase ‘through the figurative [...] both use’ is an adverbial phrase of means qualifying the verb phrase. Such phrases are *not* separated by a comma, unless they precede the verb phrase (Eastwood 1994: 327–322).

(5) One corrector suggested that there should be a colon after ‘through’ as what follows is a list. This phrases ‘figurative language’, ‘imagery’, ‘rhythm’ and ‘structure’ do not in this case comprise a ‘list’, as such: they function as complements of the preposition ‘through’ to show the means whereby the ‘poems show many similarities’.

(6) Four correctors suggested a comma here, because what follows is a ‘non-restrictive clause’ and Ellen thought that one was needed ‘because of a change of ideas’. Neither suggestion is correct: the phrase ‘in order to convey their passionate feelings about London’ functions as an infinitive clause of purpose and, as such, does *not* require a comma (Eastwood 1994: 147).

(7) Five correctors suggested that this comma should be removed because ‘the clause introduced by that is restrictive’. The comma after ‘to see’ is indeed incorrect but not for this reason: the phrase ‘that they both [...] through their poems’ is a noun clause, complement of ‘[i]t is clear to see’. Such clauses are not separated off by commas (Eastwood 1994: 71).

(8) One corrector suggested that the quotation should be preceded by a colon; this is usually only done if the quotation is ‘free standing’, i.e., is broken off by increased space from the preceding and following typescript of the main text (MHRA 2008: 44); a short quotation that runs on with the main text, as is the case here is simply in quotation marks (*MHRA* 2008: 42, which advocates the use of single quotation marks, but see the next point).

(9) Two correctors suggested that the quotation should be enclosed in double, rather than single, inverted commas on the grounds of personal preference. As indicated in the preceding note, the modern practice, at least in some academic writing, is to enclose all short quotations that run on with the main text in single quotation marks; only a

quotation within a quotation is enclosed in double quotation marks (MHRA 2008: 42). However, there is no hard and fast rule and different conventions will obtain in other genres of writing.

(10) As all six correctors noted, the sentence clearly lacks punctuation to separate it from the next one. This could be a full stop as they suggested, but a semi-colon would also have been appropriate, having regard to the link between the two sentences (Eastwood 1994: 70).

(11) One corrector suggested a comma, 'to mark a pause', but no comma is required here because the clause 'that he refers [...] something royal' is a noun clause which functions as complement of 'is so impressed [...]' (Eastwood 1994: 71).

(12) No corrector commented on the fact that the phrase 'he refers to [London's beauty] as [...]' appears to suggest that what follows will be another quotation from 'Upon Westminster Bridge'. What follows is not a quote as such but an allusion to the word 'majesty' in Wordsworth's words 'so touching in its majesty' which have just been quoted; enclosing at least 'majestic' in quotation marks would indicate this allusion.

(13) One corrector suggested replacing the comma after 'majestic' with 'and'. This would be possible, provided either both 'majestic' and 'something royal' can be treated as quotations from 'Upon Westminster Bridge' or neither can. In fact, 'something royal' is not a quotation but the writer's own comment on 'majestic'. In informal writing, a single parenthetical dash could replace the comma, but academic writing does not encourage this practice (MHRA 2008: 26).

(14) Three correctors believed there should be a comma before 'which' but this is a case where it is not possible to determine what punctuation would be correct without knowing the intention of the writer. The fact that the finite verb in the subordinate clause is third person plural suggests that the relative pronoun refers to 'sounds'. If the author intends the fact that the sounds help to express anger to be a further *defining* attribute, the clause is a restrictive relative clause, so no comma is required (Eastwood 1994: 71). However, if the sounds are already defined by the fact that they are hard and consonantal and the fact that they also help to express anger is additional information, the clause is a non-restrictive relative clause, so a comma is required (Ibid.). However, Ellen's comment suggests that she *may* have intended the clause to function as qualifying the main clause itself by way of being a comment on it, though if this were the case, she is more likely to have written 'which helps to convey'. In this case, it would be treated as a non-restrictive relative clause, so a comma would be required. In the circumstances, the suggestion is neither right nor wrong.

Data Extract 2: Brian's email.

Nick (15)

Could we make a start on arranging finance for the improvements that we have already done **(16)** as well as the further planned improvements. (17) We have spent around 10k so far this year on medium term repairs and equipment, (18) by medium term (19) I mean expenditure that will last at least 5 years. This has consisted of (20)

(21) new computers,
new hifi (not yet installed), (31)
roof repairs,
new web site,
ice machine,
redecorations (22) and concrete (22) and drainage work to the rear of the building. (23)

We have planned to close on the 4th and 5th Jan to do the following works. (24)
Estimated cost of 12k (25)
- (26) totally redo the bar area in the main dining area, (27) this will not only greatly improve the appearance of the restaurant **(28)** but also improve efficiency (29) and at the same time create an extra table for 2/3 people. (30)
-install a new hifi system which will further improve ambiance. (31)
-purchase a new espresso machine (32)
- replace the kitchen floor.

No.	Add	Remove	Correctors	Brian's comments
15	Comma		6	it's okay, it's a just a title
16	**Comma**		**4**	comma? To break the sentence maybe?
17	Question mark		5	full stop, end of sentence
18	(a dash)		2	comma, break in the sentence, easier to read
19	Comma		2	no, that's good
20	Colon		6	colon, semi-colon?
21	Dash and capital letter		3	don't know
22	Comma		2	yes, I think that's all okay
23	See note		1	just makes sense, so that's alright
24	Colon	Full stop	5	here, I don't know
25	Parentheses		4	
26	Capital letter		1	the dash? Like a bullet point, to show a list — did not get round to it in the list above — In emails, I tend to be quick and not careful
27	Full stop (or dash)		5	should be a comma here — change of meaning and direction in the sentence
28	**Comma**		**2**	
29	Comma		4	not sure
30	Dash	Solidus	2	comma? I suppose
31	See note		2	
32	Full stop		5	full stop missing here, yes

TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF CORRECTIONS — DATA EXTRACT 2

		15	**16**	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	**28**	29	30	31	32
Liz	S/GCSE	x		x			x	x	x					x		x			x
Lewis	S/UG	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x			x	x	x
Pat	S/UG	x	x	x		x	x				x			x	x	x	x	x	x
Marie	Prof	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x		x		x			x
Diana	Prof	x	x	x			x				x	x		x	x	x			x
Rick	Prof	x	x				x		x		x	x	x						

TABLE 4: ANALYSIS OF CORRECTORS — DATA EXTRACT 2

Notes:

(15) All six correctors pointed out the lack of a comma after a salutation in a letter.

(16) Four correctors suggested a comma here 'to mark a pause and because commas are sometimes used before "as well as"'. A comma would be incorrect here because the prepositional phrase 'as well as the further planned improvements' functions as second complement of 'finance for' (Eastwood 1994: 324).

(17) An interrogative sentence, as this is, should close with a question mark, not a full stop, though only five correctors noted this.

(18) Two correctors suggested that the comma here should be removed, but a comma is required here: the phrase 'by medium term [...] 5 years' with which this sentence ends is a comment on or explanation of 'medium term'. Alternatively, either this comment/explanation could instead have been preceded by a single parenthetical dash or the writer could have started a new sentence with 'by medium term [...]', using either a full stop or a semi-colon to close the previous sentence (Eastwood 1994: 70)

(19) Two correctors suggested a comma here because '"by medium term" is an introductory clause'. A comma is required because the prepositional phrase 'by medium term', which functions as complement of the verb 'mean', comes before rather than after the finite verb (Eastwood 1994: 71).

(20) All six correctors pointed out that the list which follows should be preceded by a colon (Eastwood 1994: 72).

(21) The three correctors who suggested that dashes and capital letters should be used to introduce each element in the list are neither right nor wrong, as this is not strictly a matter of punctuation but rather one of style. However, it would be better for both this vertical list and the later one to be formatted and punctuated in the same way (the later list introduces each item with a hyphen, whereas this one does not and this list uses a comma after each item except the last, whereas the later one uses full stops, apart from the second item, which has nothing).

(22) Two correctors suggested a comma after 'redecorations' and 'concrete' on the basis that a comma is required before the co-ordinating conjunction, where three or more items are joined in a series. The use of the serial comma is not obligatory in British English (Eastwood 1994: 72), so they are neither right nor wrong. However, the use of the serial comma assumes that 'redecorations' is part of a list of work to be done 'to the rear of the building' which includes 'concrete and drainage work'. If 'redecorations' is one item and 'concrete and drainage work to the rear of the building' another, it would be better for 'redecorations' to be followed by a comma (for consistency with the punctuation of the previous four items in the vertical list) and a line break (see the next point).

(23) One corrector suggested that 'concrete and drainage work to the rear of the building' constitutes the last element of the list and should figure on the next line, after a dash, starting with a capital letter, and without the first 'and', like this:

— Concrete and drainage work to the rear of the building.

This is not strictly a punctuation point but is nonetheless a valid one; the formatting should replicate that of the previous items, though this time the phrase will be punctuated by a full stop.

(24) This phrase should end with a colon, not a full stop, as it introduces the list that follows (Eastwood 1994: 72), although only five correctors made this point.

(25) As four correctors pointed out, the phrase 'Estimated cost of 12k' is effectively a parenthetical comment on the 'following works', so would be better moved to the end of the phrase '[w]e have planned [...] following works' and either enclosed within parentheses or preceded by either a comma or a dash; the upper case 'E' would, of course, be changed to a lower case 'e'.

(26) One corrector suggested that capital letters should be used to introduce each element in the list, but, as observed under note 21, there are no rules which prescribe how a vertical list should be formatted and punctuated beyond the general rule that formatting and punctuation should be consistent not only as regards the items in the particular vertical list but also as regards any other vertical lists in the same piece of writing.

(27) Five correctors suggested a full stop after 'main dining area'. Certainly punctuation of some sort is needed but the phrase beginning 'this will not only greatly improve [...]' comments on and explains the need for the proposed refurbishment of the bar area; a full stop would be too extreme. In view of its parenthetical nature, it would be better to introduce the phrase by a dash and, in order to make the punctuation of this list consistent with that of the first, close it with a comma; the remaining items in the list except the last should similarly end with a comma.

(28) Two correctors suggested a comma on the basis that there is sometimes a comma before 'and also'. The construction 'not only [...] but also' illustrates the use of correlative co-ordinating conjunctions, i.e. conjunctions which link two phrases that are in a complementary or reciprocal relationship, in this case the verb phrases 'this will [...] improve greatly' and '[this] will [...] improve efficiency'. Whether or not a comma is required between the two clauses depends on whether or not the second verb immediately follows the conjunction: if it does, as is the case here, no comma is required (Eastwood 1994: 70). If the subject of the second verb were expressed, a comma would be necessary: 'this will not only improve [...], but this will also improve [...]'.

(29) Four correctors suggested a comma here because 'a comma is required before a co-ordinating conjunction'. British English tends not to insert a comma, where the second main verb immediately follows a co-ordinating conjunction, (Eastwood 1994: 70) or would do, were it not for the interpolation of an adverbial phrase, as is the case here. The addition of a comma would, therefore, be an instance of 'unconventional punctuation'. The adverbial phrase 'at the same time' should itself be enclosed within commas (Eastwood 1994: 71).

(30) Two people suggested that the slash (or solidus) '/' should be replaced by a dash '–', as the latter is used to express a range, whereas the former indicates a relationship between two or more objects. However, the slash can also be used as a substitute for 'or' and the

phrase ‘a table for 2/3 people’ can be understood as meaning ‘a table for two or three people’, so its use here is not incorrect.

(31) Although this is not strictly a punctuation point, two correctors pointed out that ‘hi-fi’ requires a hyphen (here and also in the first list).

(32) Five correctors pointed out that the full stop, which has otherwise been used consistently at the end of each clause in this list, is missing here. This is a valid point, although, in order to be consistent with the punctuation used in the *first* list, each item in this list should end with a comma, except the last which should end with a full stop (see note 27).

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[51] There is clearly a typographical error in the on-line version of this article: it should be 'Punctuation-pronunciation' (Eds.).

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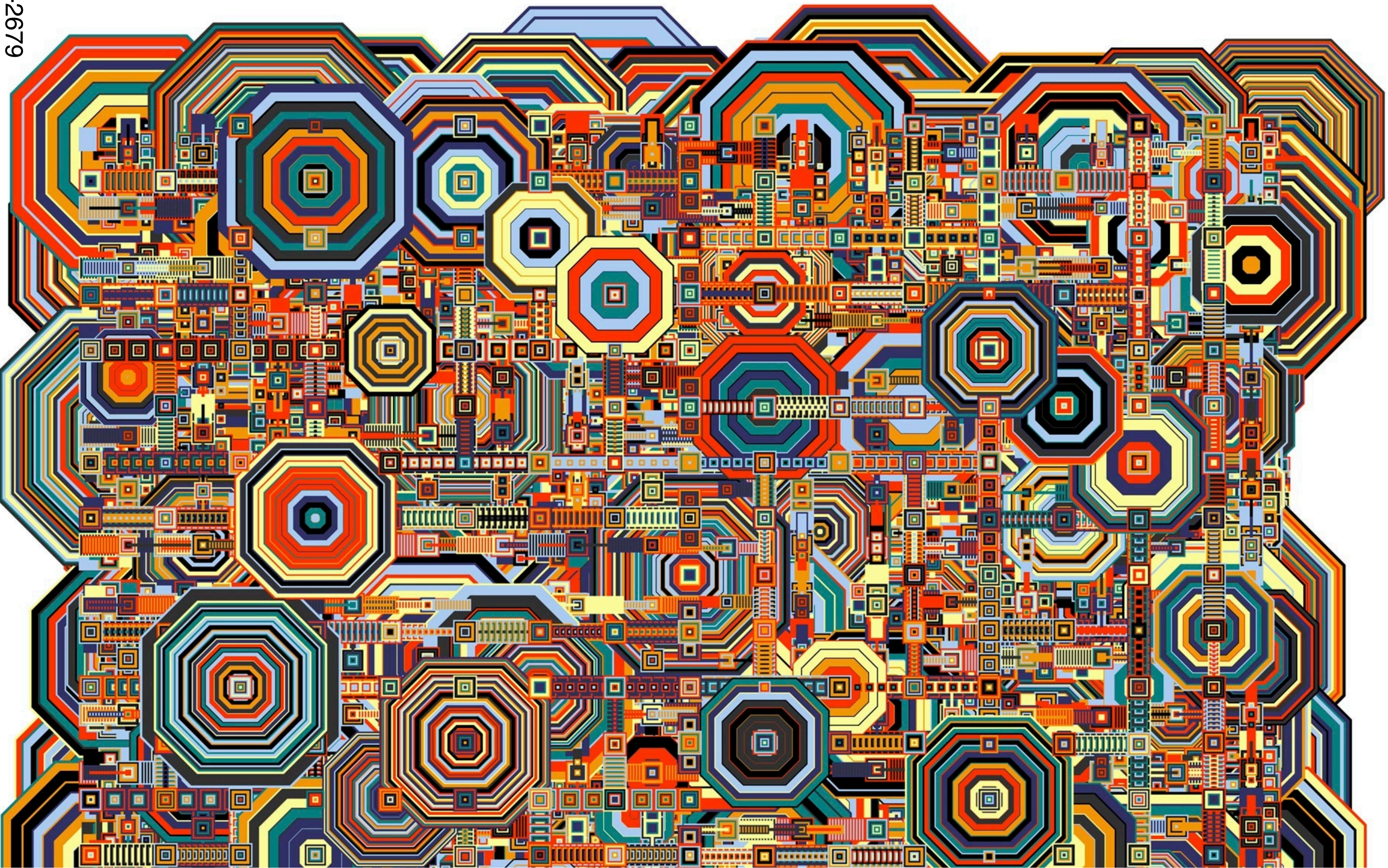

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