

The active presence of absent things:
a study in social documentary photography
and the philosophical hermeneutics
of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005).

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Chapter 1.

Part 1.

Abstract

“Phenomenology is the place where hermeneutics originates, phenomenology is also the place it has left behind.” (Ricoeur)¹

In this thesis I shall examine possibilities for bringing into dialogue the practice of social documentary photography and the conceptual resources of the post-Structural and critical philosophical hermeneutics of text and action developed by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) from the 1970's onwards. Ricoeur called this an 'amplifying' hermeneutics of language, defined as 'the art of deciphering indirect meaning' (*ibid*).

Social documentary photography is an intentional activity concerned with the visual interpretation, ethics and representation of life, the otherness of others, and through them something about ourselves. The narratives form social histories of encounters with others. They raise challenging questions of meaning and interpretation in understanding the relations of their subjective agency to an objective reality. Traditionally the meaning of such work is propositional. It consists in the truth conditions of bearing witness to the direct experience of the world and the verifiability of what the photography *says*, or appears to say about it. To understand the meaning of the photography is to know what would make it true or false. This theory has proven useful and durable, although it has not gone unchallenged. The power it has is remarkable and new documentary narratives continue to be formed in this perspective, adapting to changing technologies, and reverberate with us today.

A more subtle way of thinking about this is given by a pragmatic theory of meaning. This is what I am proposing. The focus here is upon *use* and what documentary photography *does* and *says*. A praxis that I refer to by the act of *photographing*: a discourse of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances in whose thoughtful and informed making are unified theories of visual texts within the theories of action and history. The key is the capacity to produce *visual narratives* made with intention and purpose that in their performative poetics and their semantic innovations attest to the realities of

¹ Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press.

experience and sedimented historical conditions witnessed, and communicate those to others within a dialectic of historical consciousness and understanding.

The narrative visualisations disclose a world, a context in which the drama of our own life and the lives of others makes sense. In their interpretations of an empiric reality can be found ethical concerns and extensions of meaning beyond the original reference that survive the absence of the original subject matter and the original author of the photography whose inferences our imaginations and later acquired knowledge can meditate upon and re-interpret. Thus in the hermeneutic view, the documentary photographic narrative is a form of text that comes to occupy an autonomy from, a) the author's original intentions, b) the reference of the original photographic context, and c) their reception, assimilation and understanding by unknown readers-viewers.

Ricoeur argues that hermeneutic interpretation discloses the reader as 'a second order reference standing in front of the text', whose necessary presence solicits a series of multiple and often conflicting readings and interpretations. Consequently Ricoeur's critical, philosophical hermeneutics brings us from epistemology to a kind of 'truncated' ontology that is only provisional, a place where interpretation is always something begun but never completed. Interpretation according to Ricoeur engages us within a hermeneutic circle of explanation and understanding whose dialectic is mediated in history and time. For Ricoeur this implies that to be able to interpret meaning and make sense of the world beyond us is to arrive in a conversation that has already begun. His hermeneutic wager is, moreover, that our self-understandings will be enriched by the encounter. In short, the more we understand others and what is meaningful for them the better we will be able to understand ourselves and our sense of inner meaning. The central thesis of his hermeneutics is that interpretation is an ongoing process that is never completed, belonging to meaning in and through distance, that can make actively present to the imagination what is objectively absent and whose discourse is understood as the act of "someone saying something about something to someone" (Ricoeur 1995: *Intellectual Autobiography*).²

The research question.

The question to which this thesis is addressed can be stated in the following terms:

Paul Ricoeur's concept of a critical philosophical hermeneutics is centred in the theory of the text, the theory of action, and the theory of history, that he grounded in Language and notions of semantic innovation, narrative, and ethically informed practical reasoning. Can the conceptual resources of this amplifying hermeneutic be generalised, extended beyond this sphere of discourse and brought into dialogue with the visual domain and discourse of the theory and practice of a humanist, social documentary photography and

² Ricoeur. P 1995/6: *Intellectual Autobiography* in Hahn. L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court.

visualising narratives of social and cultural life, in imagination, action, and history? How can the dialogue be best carried out? What new understandings will the dialogue bring? Where do the limits of the dialogue lie?

Ricoeur states that in his view, "...for a theory constructed within the sphere of language, the best test of its claim to universality lies in determining its capacity for extension to the sphere of practice..." (Ricoeur 1995 *ibid*).

This thesis puts that transition to the test, unifying the interpretive practice and poetics of a particular genre of social documentary photography as intentional interventions in the world, to the theorising model of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics of language, text, action and history. The photographic narratives are thought of as a form of text with close similarities to the texts of written language of Ricoeur's hermeneutic. Both are ordered and structured creations in which motivation blends with cause, explanation with understanding in their discourse. Each creates an autonomous world in actions to be defined using Ricoeur's own formula as:

"the act of someone saying something about something to someone".

Innovation I: Literature review.

A thorough literature review shows that within the published literature and the practice of social documentary photography, critical analysis and discussion of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics scarcely exists. Conversely, within the philosophical literature devoted to the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, discussion and any critical analysis of a possible dialogue between the two domains also scarcely appears to exist. This is surprising because Ricoeur extended his hermeneutics into the humanities, recognising the two have an affinity and much ground in common;³ for the photography is about agency, action and interpreting life, and Ricoeur's philosophy of hermeneutics is also grounded in action, agency and the notion that meaningful life is a constant re-interpretation of life. This thesis is addressed to this perplexing and challenging aporia in both domains.

Methodology

Theory into Practice.

The thesis submission is entirely the original work of R.G.Brown.

The thesis is part practice in social documentary photography fieldwork, part written theory in Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics, and their analysis and evaluation. The photography is contextualised in contemporary ethnography and historical, archaeological forensic science. The work has, in parts, been previously published and the photography publicly exhibited. The previous written publications are not in the form presented here,

³ Ricoeur P 1981: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Essays in Hermeneutics I*. J.B.Thompson (ed). Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

but developmental exercises in earlier thought. Developmental presentations and discussions of the work have also been delivered to academic peer conferences in philosophy, visual sociology and visual archaeology. All are listed here and in the full Bibliography.

The written text.

The written thesis follows standard hypothetico-deductive techniques of examining and analysing the writings on philosophical hermeneutics by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), and by selected commentators. I am focusing upon the books and essays Ricoeur wrote in which he adopted the model of Language and the theories of the written text, action and history, in which to organise and structure a critical post-Saussurean hermeneutics of amplification and affirmation. To develop the theory of the text he added the theory of action and the theory of history in a move that signifies the passage from phenomenology to a hermeneutics with a focus upon language and practical reasoning (Agis-Villaverde 2012).⁴ Ricoeur's hermeneutic proposition is tested and evaluated by practical application through two fieldwork Case Studies in digital, social documentary photography, that I have photographed, exhibited, written on and published. The written thesis and the resulting two books of photographs with their own written texts are where I am looking to mediate an affinity between written language and the visual image that Ricoeur holds apart and yet feels natural.

Case Studies: Fieldwork in social documentary photography.

The photographic Case Studies give examples of a continuum of social documentary practice that extends from the historical and ethnographic to the historical and archaeological. Both make full use of descriptive and aesthetic considerations in the deployment of photographic skills, knowledge and techniques to achieve their documentary goals. The photography is central to both and supplemented by a written text that I have researched and authored, that provides the social and historical context.

Case Study 1: *Regeneration Waterside South*, the fieldwork photography lays stress on following standard anthropological techniques of qualitative participating observation and grounded theory where description, representation and theory emerges through processes of reflection and disclosure of things relevant to the narrative⁵. This is supplemented by informal interviews and oral dialogues with the people affected, and complimented by research in published histories and other secondary sources that I have written up as a text to complete the narrative.

Case Study 2: *Imperium*, the photography lays stress on studio lighting techniques and skilled macroscopic levels of observation and descriptive documentation of the forensic evidence revealed. The skills and techniques are those widely found and

⁴ Agis -Villaverde, Marcelino 2012 (a): *Knowledge and Practical Reason: Paul Ricoeur's Way Of Thinking*. International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. Vol 5. Prof.Dr.Dr Andrzej Wiercinski (Ed).LiT Verlag. Munster.

⁵ Glazer, B & Strauss, A 1967: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory, strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago. Aldine.

emphasised in studio still life, food and advertising photography. The photography is supplemented with a written text that I researched and authored that draws upon published archaeological resources, historians and chronicles of C14th Medieval England, that provides an authoritative context and completes the narrative.

The two Case Studies both make full use new and emerging digital photography, printing, and publishing techniques. The photographs in both are systematically intended for a dual purpose. Their primary purpose is to support the written thesis by providing concrete examples of documentary photography as hermeneutics in action. Both projects were commissioned, and their purpose is epistemological, made to fulfil the broader requirements of their commissioning agents for knowledge of their subject. They form two poles in a continuum of applied applications and historical consciousness in which are raised questions about the relations of a visual narrative to interpreting history and phenomenological reality.



*Fig 1.1: Case Study 1. 'Regeneration Waterside South'
Original Exhibition Poster
17th March - 26th April 2008
The Dresden Street Community Centre & St. Luke's Church Hall.
Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire*



Fig 1.2: Case Study 2. 'Imperium 1326: The Death of a Tyrant? Hulton Abbey and an archaeological mystery.'

*Exhibition titled: 'Hanged, Drawn, Quartered: CSi 1326 a.d'
October 14th - November 14th 2012
The Science Centre Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent.*

Examples.

Case Study 1



Fig 1.3: Waterside South, new housing development along the Caldon Canal. The old Wellington District is in the background.

Case Study 2



Fig 1.4: Hulton Abbey skeleton HA16. Cervical Vertebra C3 showing peri-mortem trauma of beheading.

The Case Study photography is commissioned work. Both Case Studies are supplemented each by a published hardback book, photographed and written by me, that provide the photographic illustrations with a written historical context for the work. A copy of each book is submitted with the written thesis (Brown R.G 2012 (b) (c)). A PDF file of each book is included within the Appendices, but I must point out that the .pdf files (supplied by the book publisher, Blurb.com) lose the design integrity of the books as a consequence of the transfer from the publication format to the .pdf format. The documentary photography of both Case Studies have been given public exhibition. A peer reviewed article drawing on the thesis fieldwork and research has been published in a new textbook

for visual social science, *A Guide to using Visual Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. S. Spencer (Ed) 2011, by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Ltd. (Brown, R. G 2011).

The Case Studies are referred to again in Chapter 3: *On Documentary Photography*, and discussed more fully in Chapter 4: *Photography Case Studies*.

Exhibitions and Publications.

Case Study 1: *Regeneration, Waterside South* is original digital photography commissioned by The Arts Council, West Midlands and RENEW: the North Staffordshire Housing Regeneration Agency, for a community arts project Place, Space & Identity I, on the theme of the social and economic regeneration of a district of central Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. The photography extended part-time over the six month period of September 2007 - February 2008. I subsequently researched and monitored the progress of the regeneration programme until it was cancelled in March 2011 to write the text providing the social context for the photography.

Exhibition 2008:

Brown, R.G 2008 (c): *'Waterside South'*. 17th March - 26th April 2008.

The Dresden Street Community Centre & St. Luke's Church Hall. Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. The Arts Council West Midlands / RENEW North Staffordshire / BArts / 'Place, Space & Identity 1' Community Arts Commission. (Self curated and digitally printed).

Publications

Brown, R.G 2008 (d): *'Waterside South'* in Lock. E and Henner. M (eds) 2008: *'The Art of Beauty and the Earth'* Newcastle-u-Lyme. BArts Publishing.

Brown, R.G 2011 (a): *'Photography as process, documentary photographing as discourse'* in Spencer. S 2011: *'Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Awakening Visions'* London and New York. Routledge.

Brown, R.G 2012(b): *Regeneration: Waterside South*. Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Digitally printed on-line by Blurb Inc. @ <www.blurb.co.uk>. Hard back.

Case Study 2: *Imperium 1326: The Death of a Tyrant? Hulton Abbey and an archaeological mystery*. The original digital photography was commissioned by Professor John Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, Staffordshire University, for an inter-disciplinary research project *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project*, funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the JISC Physical Sciences e-Learning Programme II. The commission was to photograph a skeleton excavated from Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent, thought to be unique in the archaeological and medieval history records for showing the severe peri-mortem trauma associated with a State execution by hanging, drawing and quartering of the victim, dated to 1326 and circumstantially attributed to being the remains of Hugh Despenser, Chamberlain to King Edward II. Despenser was executed in this way for treason in November 1326. The

intention was to make macro-photographs of such precision and clarity they could be downloaded to an especially designed DVD and used in the teaching of forensic archaeology and anthropology sciences trauma diagnostics, obviating the need to handle the fragile original skeleton bones. The skeleton was photographed at Reading University, Department of Archaeology, July 2008. I subsequently researched the reign of Edward II, his wife Isabella, and the role of Hugh Despenser and wrote the accompanying text to provide an historical context for the photography.

Exhibitions:

Brown, R.G 2011(b): *Photography, Agency and Hermeneutic Understanding*. International Visualisation in Archaeology Conference 2011. English Heritage/Southampton University. (Conference paper & poster exhibition).

Brown, R.G 2012(a): *'Hanged, Drawn, Quartered: CSI 1326 a.d'*. The Science Centre. Staffordshire University, UK. (Curated by Professor J.P Cassella and Mrs S. Lawton, with digital prints by Mr D.Mullany).

Publications:

Brown, R.G 2008 (a): *'HASDiP: The Photography Protocols'* in Cassella, J; Lewis, Mary. E; Brown, R; & Lucking, P 2008: *'HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project'* HEA Physical Sciences Centre / JISC Academy Distributed e-Learning (DeL) Programme 11:

<[www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/home/projects/digitisationproject/final report](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/home/projects/digitisationproject/final%20report) >.

Brown, R.G 2008 (b): *'HASDiP: the Inter-active DVD'* in association with Cassella, J; Lewis, Mary E. ; Lucking, P 2008: *'The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project Teaching & Learning DVD'*. Staffordshire University / HEA Physical Sciences Centre / JISC Academy Distributed e-Learning (DeL) Programme II. Available for PC and MAC OS-X platforms.

Brown, R.G 2011 (a): *'Photography as process, documentary photography as discourse'* in Spencer, S 2011: *'Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Awakening Visions'* London and New York. Routledge

Brown, R.G 2012(c): *Imperium 1326: Hulton Abbey and the Death of a Tyrant?* Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Digitally printed by Blurb Inc on-line @ <www.blurb.co.uk>. Hard back.

Other Publications:

A peer reviewed article discussing aspects of the theme of the thesis in a new visual social sciences textbook:

Brown, R. G 2011: *Photography as process, documentary photography as discourse*. In Spencer, S 2011: *A Guide to using Visual Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. London. Routledge, Taylor & Francis. ISBN: 978-0-415-48382-7 (hbk). ISBN: 978-0-415-48385-8 (pbk). ISBN: 978-0-203-88386-0 (ebk).

I have discussed both projects at peer international conferences in visual sociology and visual archaeology. The details are given below. I have also published, recently, an article based upon this thesis in a new textbook for visual research in social sciences. A copy of the article is included within the Appendices. The case study in forensic science and

archaeology resulted in the publication of a co-authored inter-active teaching and learning DVD. A copy is included within the appropriate book. The full HEA/JISC research report authored by Professor John Cassella also includes a section on the digital photography protocols that I have written. I give examples of the photography from each case study on page 7 and elsewhere within the written thesis.

Conference presentations related to the thesis.

Brown, R.G 2005 (b): *"Documentary photography the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur"*. International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. Santorini. Greece.

Brown, R.G 2006 (c): *"On Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), Hermeneutics and Photography"* International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. Urbino Free University. Urbino. Italy

Brown, R.G 2009 (a): *'Documentary discourse, narrative and Ricoeur's hermeneutic.'* International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. University of Cumbria, Carlisle. UK.

Brown, R.G 2009 (b): *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project Photography: a hermeneutic visualism.* Visualisation in Archaeology Conference 2009. English Heritage. Southampton University.

Brown, R.G 2011(b): *Photography, Agency and Hermeneutic Understanding.* International Visualisation in Archaeology Conference 2011.

Brown, R.G 2013: *Documentary Photography, Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the World of the Text.* Staffordshire University & Glyndwr University Research Conference. Staffordshire University. Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire.

Part 2.

Introduction

"Hermeneutics is the art of deciphering indirect meaning"(Ricoeur).

Scope of the thesis: Core problem.

This thesis brings the theory and practice of social documentary photography into dialogue with the conceptual resources of the critical, post-Structural, philosophical hermeneutics of text, action and history developed by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005).

At the core of the thesis lies a single problem common to both the photography and the hermeneutics. That is: how to combine the perspective of a single agency, a person, inside the world with an objective view of that world, and to do so in such a way that the subjective viewpoint of the agent is included but does not over intrude on the desire for an objective observation? A satisfactory resolution to the problem brings together questions about ethics and morality, knowledge, reason, freedom and free will, consciousness and self-consciousness, the self, meaning and the relation of mind and self to the physical world of reality and others. In short how the inner and outer perspectives on the world and experience are to be related, and give a satisfactory account of that.

Paul Ricoeur offers through his later hermeneutics a stable and coherent conceptual perspective that can provide answers to this question. In recognising that social documentary photography is centred in an individual agency and grounded in the reasoning and social actions of a capable subject, that by its' nature is interpretive and produces work of an historical text-like structure, there is the recognition of an affinity with Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Ricoeur's post-Structural and critical hermeneutics that he developed from the 1970's is also grounded in the agency of a capable subject whose social actions and meaningful interpretive events and moments Ricoeur analyses through the structure and methodology of the theory of the text, the theory of action, and the theory of history. Ricoeur's idea of 'a moral and capable person' owes much to Kant. It is the idea of a rational being, capable of choice, and therefore endowed with dignity, worthy of respect, having rights and obligations met through practical reasoning and emotional responsibility (Kant 1785: *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*).⁶ A figure that must be regarded always as an end in itself (Midgley 1996 (b): *Utopias, Dolphins and Computers*. p111).⁷

Ricoeur's critical hermeneutic ('Critical' because always open to amendment and modification), is constructed in a dialectic of meaningful explanation and understanding of human knowledge and experience, in fluid relations that link author, text and reader together, in a three-fold *mimesis* of interpretation and affirmation of authorial Figuration (*mimesis*₁); textual Configuration - the 'world of the text' (*mimesis*₂); and reader Refiguration (*mimesis*₃); that he designates as an *attestation*, a credence that is also a trust, and what is commonly called a matter of conscience (Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another* p21-23).⁸

An "Elective Affinity" & Max Weber.

How might the dialogue between the two fields unfold? Social documentary photography is centred in the visual. Ricoeur's hermeneutic is centred in language, and written language especially. To help answer this I shall turn to Weber's sociological construct of "elective affinity" within a scheme of Kantian reason. Weber utilised the notion of "*elective affinity*", which he absorbed from the literary thinking and practice of Goethe, as a conceptual tool and mediation between ideology and practical living. He did so in seeking to understand, sociologically, different types of rational social action that people could be seen to adopt amidst social conditions of often radical historical change, from traditional agrarian economies and modes of production and consumption to C19th industrial economies structured on capitalist modes of production and consumption. Weber's most notable example, perhaps, being to show how an ideological Calvinist

⁶ Kant 1785: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Translated as *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Lewis White. New York. Bobbs-Merrill. 1959.

⁷ Midgley. M 1996 (b): *Utopias, Dolphins and Computers*'. London. Routledge.

⁸ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

Protestant ethic of personal responsibility and self-discipline enabled people to apply themselves, in practical terms, rationally and responsibly to the specific tasks of ‘work’ assigned them in an industrialised occupational world (Weber 1905: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*).⁹ In Weber’s sociological construct, “elective affinity” is not well defined, but used flexibly across a range of topics and concerns. It is, in my view, a concept that mediates between different states of affairs that might otherwise appear to have little in common. I discuss this further in Chapter 3: *On Documentary Photography*.

Ricoeur’s hermeneutic provides us with a coherent methodology through which a Weberian conception of an elective affinity can mediate and be seen to work. That is, between what we might call the practice of documentary photography and the ideology of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics. Curiously enough, I think we can also stand the notion of its head, and see that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics effectively mediates the mediation of Weber’s notion of an elective affinity.

Innovation II.

The thesis innovates in a further number of ways. It begins the process of addressing the central aporetic of two domains concerned with the interpretation of life not, apparently, having yet been unified; notwithstanding Ricoeur’s own desire to extend his hermeneutic beyond philosophy into the humanities, a process he began in his lifetime. Current research in Ricoeur’s hermeneutic, post-mortem, is working further to that end, as I will show. The thesis is aligned with this desire. Second, it examines and questions the subordination made by Ricoeur, of the visual image to the primacy of Language in the domain of a hermeneutic of imagination, action and discourse (Ricoeur 1991: *Imagination in Discourse and in Action*).¹⁰ Third, it addresses the perplexing lack of awareness about Ricoeur’s hermeneutic in the literature theorising the domain of Photography that is currently dominated by aesthetics and residues of a post-modern interest in semiotics. Fourth, it innovates in being written by a practising, published, exhibited and until recently teaching humanist documentary photographer.

A philosophical anthropology and photographic anthropology.

Ricoeur called his philosophy “a philosophical anthropology” because of the central importance he gave to the subject as Self and Self-Consciousness coming to realisation fully in an active social world on inter-actions with others. A self who achieves and yet

⁹ Weber, Max 1905: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, and other Essays*. Harmondsworth. Penguin Classics 2002 edition.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, P 1991: *Imagination in Discourse and in Action*. In - Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. (FTA).

suffers (Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another*).¹¹ I like to call the social documentary photography that interests me “a photographic anthropology” because of its ethical concern and focus upon human life. It feels natural to do so.

My education lies within anthropology and archaeology in which I hold an Honours Degree from Christ’s College, Cambridge University (BA Hons 1974; MA 1976). I have actively pursued this interest since within the fields of visual anthropology, visual sociology and visual archaeology.¹² I am neither a professional philosopher nor a professional historian but one who is very interested in both, for pleasure and the intellectual enrichment of ideas and understanding this brings of the ‘examined life’. My interest is both for its own sake, and for the pragmatic utility in being able to bring that knowledge to bear upon documentary photography as a way of thinking and practical reasoning about the human social imaginary and life. As I discuss in Chapter 3 *On Documentary Photography* the photography is there to do a job. The question is *how* and *how well* does it do that in ways that are intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally satisfying?

From phenomenology to hermeneutics.

The thesis examines Ricoeur’s analysis of the grounding of a hermeneutic logic in Husserl’s phenomenology, through Heidegger, Gadamer and Habermas, to his own distinctive hermeneutic of Language surpassing phenomenology that is structured upon the theory of the text, the theory of action and the theory of history. I shall systematically examine Ricoeur’s development of this, and his proposition that the hermeneutic dialectic passes through an empiric detour of the text and indirect reference, to an ontological horizon of world-meaning and semantic innovation that he calls the autonomous ‘world of the text’, that is opened up to imagination and discourse by the narrative poetics of language (Ricoeur 1991: *From Text to Action*).¹³ Ricoeur extended this hermeneutic into two further domains of concern. A return to examining subjectivity and the being of the self-conscious Subject coming to self-realisation through Other (Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another*);¹⁴ and the development of a functional hermeneutic of practical reasoning in areas of the social imaginary and ideology (Ricoeur 1986: *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*).¹⁵

¹¹ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

¹² I have, also, extensive experience as a professional studio still life advertising, and a location industrial photographer working in Aberdeen, London and Oxford.

¹³ Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. (FTA *ibid*).

¹⁴ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press. (OAA)

¹⁵ Ricoeur, P 1986: *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. New York. Columbia University Press. (LIU).

Social Documentary Photography.

‘Photography’ as a general category has active and passive aspects. Photographic theory reflects that duality.

Like water that flows everywhere and finds its own level, ‘Photography’ is everywhere in our lives and in that ubiquity finds its own level. In this it is also like Language. In speech and writing, language is everywhere and serves all needful purposes of communication, from the most mundane technical instructions of a cookery recipe to the most sublime of literary expressions. Where photography and language unite is that both are fundamentally about communication to others, from the ‘here’ of an individual percept to the social universe consisting in those who can understand that language. We know this to be the case empirically. I had occasion recently to be standing beside a group of a dozen or so young men from India. They were talking and laughing together in their own language. To my ears it was simply sound with an appealing musical rhythm. Very pleasant and entirely without meaning for me. I asked them what was their language and they told me in English they were speaking Tamil and dialects of Tamil from southern India. They also happily told me that there are twenty-six different languages spoken in the Indian sub-continent, few of which are mutually intelligible. I was suitably impressed. Similar circumstances have applied historically to photography. People need to learn how to ‘read’ the photographic image. We learn as we learn language when a child, by endless repetition and being told that such and such configuration of marks in the picture is such and such in reality. Maynard takes this as his starting point in discussing his philosophy of photography (Maynard, P 1997: *The Engine of Visualisation*).¹⁶

The historical literature in anthropology has many examples of indigenous peoples in the past who when first shown photographs of themselves by the visiting anthropologist were unable to recognise what they were seeing, but learned when shown how. Even today both ourselves and others feel there is a certain spiritual mysticism bound into both the written and visual artefact that somehow connects us to the author or the subject of the picture, and/or the maker of the picture, despite our supposed education, sophistication and familiarity with language and photography. We are quite comfortable with the idea that a piece of paper or a viewing screen bearing symbolic marks joins us to the original cause of those marks as being Great Aunt Nellie, and to the author of a text or picture. Wright, for example, elaborates the distress of certain contemporary Solomon Islanders whose colour prints of photographs of the parents and ancestors are now fading into oblivion

¹⁶ Maynard, P 1997: *The Engine of Visualisation: thinking through photography*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press.

(Wright, C 2009: '*Faletau's Photocopy, or the Mutability of Visual History in Roviana*').¹⁷

From this cosmos of 'Photography' I am selecting a certain type of practice: Social Documentary; and from within that universe I am further selecting certain examples to examine and discuss. From a secure foundation in that particular we might anticipate worthwhile generalizations emerging. The humanist social documentary photography that interests me is a photography that is intentional, reflexive and self-aware, examining and questioning aspects of contemporary life, the histories and historical contexts that gave rise to it, whilst respecting the purposes and interests of its practitioners and co-operating subjects. This is the approach taken to the fieldwork photography for the thesis Case Studies. It is an ethical photography of action, judgement and skill, a *phronesis* reconfigured into a Kantian schematism of visual and written texts.

Photography: A Three-Fold Structure.

Mine is a process approach, a photography whose hermeneutic is bound to intention, action, reflection and history. To make this clear I am dividing the category 'Photography' into a three-fold structure of: *Photography, The Photograph, Photographing*.

My emphasis is on *Photographing*.

Photographing: This is an ostensive definition describing an historical process of agency, intention, action, purpose and reflection in making social documentaries, to which I attach the Aristotelian definitions of *praxis* and *phronesis*. It has professional (that is, critical, philosophical and theoretical) and amateur aspects which overlap in areas of technical knowledge and technique in their application.

'The Photograph': An ostensive definition. The Photograph is the typical subject for post-modern social critical and semiotic photography theory. It is applied to the single photographic image, isolated from its historical context and analysed by using varieties of methods. Analysis and debate is theorised within art historical discourse (Elkins 2007),¹⁸ or within an Anglo-American philosophy discourse. Both meditate upon photography as an art form (Walden 2008: *Photography and Philosophy*).¹⁹ Both theorising perspectives share in an over-riding concern for the aesthetics of the image and photographic art practice subsumed within an historical canon, (Szarkowski 1965/2007:

¹⁷ Wright, C 2009: '*Faletau's Photocopy, or the Mutability of Visual History in Roviana*'. In *Photography, Anthropology and History: expanding the frame*. ed. by Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards. Ashgate. pp. 223-239

¹⁸ Elkins, J 2007: *Photography Theory*. London. Routledge.

¹⁹ Walden, S (ed) 2008: *Photography and Philosophy, essays on the pencil of nature*. Oxford. Blackwell.

The Photographer's Eye),²⁰ (Costello & Iversen 2010: *Photography after Conceptual Art*),²¹ Amateur interest overlaps with these in areas of technical knowledge.

'Photography': is an ostensive definition where scientific theory attends upon the manifold of physics, chemistry and technology that make possible the visual medium of Photography.

'Photography' is also an ostensive definition describing a general category or domain of endeavour, into which professional and popular understanding lumps together all or some of the above, under the widely understood rubric 'Photography' (Badger 2007: *The Genius of Photography*)²² and making pictures of anything and everything by means of technology (Flusser 2000: *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*).²³ No particular knowledge of the science is necessary, except in areas of applied professional practice such as high-end advertising photography, or certain individual practices of art photography, where the potentials of the science and technologies are frequently pushed to their maximum. The general definition becomes accepted as social knowledge through endless processes of recognition of things called photographs, whose repetition leads to the creation of habit. So although different photographs may be of different things, whether pictures of the distant reaches of the known universe, or of rocks on Mars, the feeding habits of the duckbill platypus, or portraits of Great Aunt Agatha, people have no difficulty in applying the same name to these various epiphanies (Russell 1948: *Ostensive Definitions*).²⁴

The Concerned Photographer.

From the cosmic generality of Photography and the universe of Documentary, I am isolating and examining a particular kind of humanist, social documentary photography theory and practice. It is often referred to as a photography of 'Concern, Care and Compassion' (Capa 1972: *The Concerned Photographer*).²⁵ This is a photography with a long history rooted, on the one hand, in nineteenth-century concerns for reform of the worst consequences for people of industrialisation that gave rise to social and economic circumstances denominated by Disraeli as the 'Two Nations' of rich and poor (Disraeli 1845: *Sybil*);²⁶ (Newsome 1997: *The Victorian World Picture*);²⁷ on another hand, that

²⁰ Szarkowski J 1965: *The Photographer's Eye*. reprinted 2007. New York. The Museum of Modern Art.

²¹ Costello, D (ed) & Iversen, M (ed) 2010: *Photography after Conceptual Art (Art History Special Issues)*. Wiley-Blackwell.

²² Badger, G 2007: *The Genius of Photography: how photography has changed our lives*. London. Quadrille Publishing.

²³ Flusser, V. 2000: *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. London. Reaktion.

²⁴ Russell, Bertrand 1948: *Ostensive Definition*. In *Human Knowledge: Its scope and limits*. London. George Allen & Unwin. pp78-86.

²⁵ Capa, C 1972: *The Concerned Photographer 2*. London. Thames and Hudson.

²⁶ Disraeli, B 1845: *Sybil: or the Two Nations*. 2008 edition. Smith, S (Ed). Oxford. Oxford World Classics.

reached maturity of expression within professional journalism and photo-reportage, (Hamilton 1995 (b): *Willy Ronis*..),²⁸ (Lardinois 2009: *Magnum, Magnum*),²⁹ (Shore 2004: *Uncommon Places*),³⁰ (Strand & Davidson 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*);³¹ on a third hand, found expression in the exuberant adoption of picture making by enthusiastic amateurs photographing their lives and events as a hobby, for fun and family records, (Taylor 2007: *Impressed by Light*),³² (Ford & Steinorth 1988: *You Press the Button*..),³³ (Badger 2007: *The Genius of Photography*..);³⁴ and on a fourth hand, in the adoption of documentary photography into the social scientific methodologies of visual anthropology and visual sociology, (Banks & Ruby 2011: *Made to be seen*..),³⁵ (Gardner 2009: *Giving Visual Witness*..),³⁶ (Harper 1998: *An Argument for Visual Sociology*..)³⁷ I discuss this further in Chapter 3: *On Documentary Photography*.

Limits.

I am not in any sense writing a history of documentary photography, nor am I attempting to be comprehensive but selective and choosing from amongst the huge amount of work available, within a field of practice that is everywhere evolving rapidly.

What strikes me as significant about this, is that humanist documentary is a field of photography that continues to reverberate with meaning in our lives today. New technologies and new media have not blunted that, only opened the practice to new ways of doing things and new ways of distributing the work. The distribution is however biased economically towards serving the art market because of the collapse we have experienced of weekly or monthly printed magazines, such as 'Life', that gave prominence to documentary and solid apprenticeships in the practice to their staff photographers, such as W. Eugene Smith, with a critical editorial oversight that was not always without tensions.

²⁷ Newsome, David 1997: *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change*. London. John Murray.

²⁸ Hamilton, P 1995(b): *Willy Ronis: Photographs 1926-1995*. Oxford. The Museum of Modern Art.

²⁹ Lardinois, B (Ed), 2009: *Magnum Magnum*. London. Thames & Hudson.

³⁰ Shore, S 2004: *Uncommon Places: the Complete Collection*. London. Thames & Hudson.

³¹ Strand, P & Davidson, B 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*. Photographs by Paul Strand & Text by Basil Davidson. London. MacGibbon & Kee.

³² Taylor, Roger 2007: *Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives 1840-1860*.

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

³³ Ford, C & Steinorth, K (eds) 1988: *You Press the Button, We do the Rest: the birth of snapshot photography*. The National Museum of Film and Photography. Dirk Nishen Publishing.

³⁴ Badger, G 2007: *The Genius of Photography: how photography has changed our lives*. London. Quadrille Publishing.

³⁵ Banks, M & Ruby, J 2011: *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*. Chicago and London. Chicago University Press.

³⁶ Gardner, R 2009: *Giving Visual Witness*. in Warren, C (ed) 2009: *Human Documents: Eight Photographers*. Harvard College. Peabody Museum Press.

³⁷ Harper, D 1998: *An Argument for Visual Sociology*. in Prosser, J (ed) 1998: *Image-based Research, a source book for qualitative researchers*. London. Falmer.

That has gone (Loengard 1998: *Life Photographers: What they saw*);³⁸ (Maddow 1985: *Let Truth be the Prejudice: The Life and Photographs of W. Eugene Smith*).³⁹

Ricoeur's hermeneutic proposition is tested and evaluated by practical application in this thesis through two fieldwork Case Studies in digital, social documentary photography, that I have photographed, written, exhibited and published. The written thesis text and the resulting two books of photographs and their own written texts are where I am examining and mediating an opposition between the domain of written language and the domain of the visual, that Ricoeur holds apart (Ricoeur 1991: *Imagination in Discourse and in Action*).⁴⁰

A continuum of practice.

The two Case Studies represent a continuum of applied documentary practice from a pole of forensic science and archaeology to a pole of ethnographic social science and the social imaginary, in which histories and ideologies that inform and constitute socio-political action and lived realities are disclosed. Both are narratives of a shared identity and the social imaginary. One is contemporary and of the immediate past of memory, and the other is of medieval history and written chronicles. Both touch upon how we construct history and how history mediates life. Through them I find the opportunity to examine Ricoeur's hermeneutics of text and action but also his thesis that one of the central functions of hermeneutics and practical reasoning is the interrogation of the social imaginary that governs society and motivates its peoples, that he analyses under the dialectical headings of Ideology and Utopia.

The written thesis and the Case Studies are further linked by a sense of the photography writing history within an ontological social imaginary, and by notions of cultural myth, disclosed by the photographic interpretations and constructed narratives that themselves become examples of cultural myth. This is to understand 'Myth' as meaningful in the anthropological sense, as powerful symbols held at a distance and through which perplexities and particular ways of interpreting the world are made possible, not 'falsehoods' and lies, as in common usage (Midgley 2005: *How Myths Work*).⁴¹ I discuss these further in Chapter 4: *Photography Case Studies*.

In my own practice the mood of my documentary is celebratory of people and their lives, even when circumstances look bleak. The production of the photography grows out of the relationships built up with people and their communities over time, from within which the

³⁸ Loengard, J 1998: *Life Photographers: What They Saw*. Boston, New York, London. Bulfinch Press. Little, Brown and Co.

³⁹ Maddow, B 1985: *Let Truth be the Prejudice: the Life and Photographs of W. Eugene Smith*. New York. Aperture Foundation.

⁴⁰ Ricoeur, P 1991: FTA.pp168-187.

⁴¹ Midgley, M 2005: *The Myths We Live By*. London. Routledge.

stories emerge. The work of the Amber Film and Photography collective in Newcastle-upon-Tyne is an exemplary case of contemporary work (Rigby *et al* 2013: *Amber*).⁴² There are many others, for example Olivia Arthur, James Ravilious and Sebastio Salgado (Arthur 2012: *Jeddah Diary*);⁴³ (Ravilious 2007: *An English Eye.*);⁴⁴ (Salgado 2013: *Genesis*).⁴⁵

In summary:

A humanist, social documentary photography. My interest is with the particular form of social documentary photography and its narratives, that is humanist, ethical and social scientific in attitude. I am limiting the scope of my study to a well established and critically examined form of the photography commonly labelled as one of care, concern, and respect for others.⁴⁶ The photography is an activity whose systematic intention is looking outwards to the otherness of Others, making sense of what is found, and saying something about it that is truthful and honest.⁴⁷ It is a photography built upon the phenomenology of an intentional contact with concrete reality subsisting in duration, and bearing witness to that encounter.⁴⁸ The practice has much in common with the notion of an ethical 'responsibility-for' others, given us by Levinas as the ontological meaning of being presented in the face-to-face relation.⁴⁹ It's methodology bears a close relationship to the dialectic and reflection of traditional ethnographic fieldwork methods of participating observation and understanding.⁵⁰

Paul Ricoeur and a critical, philosophical hermeneutics.

I am isolating and examining one part of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, albeit a major and comprehensive fraction: what he thought and wrote on a critical and emancipating philosophical hermeneutics that grew from and surpasses Husserl's Phenomenology, referred to by Ricoeur as an 'amplifying' Hermeneutics.⁵¹ I am not in any sense attempting to write a study of all Ricoeur's philosophy. What I am always doing is looking for correlations and mediations between Ricoeur's amplifying philosophical

⁴² Rigby, G *et al* 2013: *Amber, The Film and Photography Collective*. Accessible @ <www.amber-online.com>.

⁴³ Arthur, Olivia 2012: *Jeddah Diary*. London. Fishbar Publishing.

⁴⁴ Ravilious, J 2007: *An English Eye: The Photographs of James Ravilious*. 2nd edition. Alan Bennett, Peter Hamilton & James Ravilious. Oxford. The Bardwell Press.

⁴⁵ Salgado, Sebastio 2013: *Genesis*. Bonn. Taschen.

⁴⁶ Capa, C 1972: *The Concerned Photographer 2*. London. Thames and Hudson.

⁴⁷ Denning, G 2004: *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across Times, Cultures and Self*. Pennsylvania University Press.

⁴⁸ Gardner, R 2009: *Giving Visual Witness*. in Warren, C (ed) 2009: *Human Documents: Eight Photographers*. Harvard College. Peabody Museum Press.

⁴⁹ Levinas, E 1994: *Ethics as First Philosophy*. Newly translated and reprinted in Hand, S 1994: *The Levinas Reader*. Edited by Sean Hand. Oxford. Blackwell Publishers.

⁵⁰ Robben, A & Sluka J (eds) 2007: *Ethnographic Fieldwork, an Anthropological Reader*. Oxford. Blackwell.

⁵¹ Ricoeur, P 1995/6: 'Intellectual Autobiography' in Hahn, L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court. pp 3-53.

hermeneutics of this period and the pragmatic business of thinking about and making social documentary photography and piecing together their interpretive visuals into well ordered and intelligible narratives.

Ricoeur's epistemological and critical hermeneutics centres in Phenomenology, Language, written Text and "the problematic of the text" articulated as Discourse. Distinguishing between spoken and written language, Ricoeur developed a hermeneutics of amplification of meaning and semantic innovation within the certainty of language and the theory of the written Text, the theory of Action and the theory of History. The theory of the Text is of central importance to these and Discourse the hinge around which the three fields articulated. A Text he defines as an ordered creation, a structured totality fixed in writing, *or by any other process of inscription equivalent to writing* (which I take documentary photography to be), with the sense of being open to its own-most possibilities, and thus being available to examination. A text holds the means of inscribing and communicating multiple meanings and new semantic innovations in their expression of sense and reference, within a three-fold *mimesis* of pre-figuration (*mimesis*₁), configuration (*mimesis*₂), and re-figuration (*mimesis*₃).

Hermeneutics in Ricoeur's hands also reflects his deep concern for the conscious social Subject in self-realisation and individual freedom. Ricoeur adopts the model of the 'capable person' to express this. This is a social and autonomous individual embedded in history and dynamically engaged with their world. It can be understood in something like Kant's sense of *Mundigkeit*. Sometimes translated as 'maturity' what this means for Ricoeur is a subject with the capacity to use one's own reason and to think for oneself.

His later work extended hermeneutics into what he calls a "little ethics" of practical reasoning that has much to do with an ideal of democratic politics. He continues to develop a hermeneutic of practical reasoning examining the grounds of moral and ideological values, such as jurisprudence, liberty, rationality and truth, and their depredations by external forces. whose consequences he saw so clearly in the futility of the death of his father, and thousands of others in WWI; in WWII; in the aftermath of the so-called "Cold War" through the 1950's stand-off between the West of the USA and allies and the East of communist USSR, dominated by the threat of nuclear annihilation; and the violence of political events of the late 1960's in Paris, London, and elsewhere in Europe. His thinking bears close resemblance to Habermas for whom emancipation means not only the freedom of the autonomous individual to think for themselves and act accordingly (within social, moral and legal norms), but the identification and fostering of social institutions that create the conditions of possibility for that.⁵²

Conclusion.

⁵² Finlayson, J.G 2005: *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford. OUP.

My thesis is asking new questions about familiar and practical things from an unfamiliar theoretical perspective in which I query Ricoeur's opposition of language and the visual. Both the narrative discourse of the photography, and the discourse of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, in my view fulfil the definition that he gives of being "...*the act of someone saying something about something to someone...*".⁵³

The process of documentary photographing and the hermeneutics of text and action have much in common. In their ways of proceeding both unify 'scientific' technicalities with imagination and aesthetics. Ricoeur's hermeneutic ultimately rests upon an aesthetic of the beauties and pleasures of language. Both deal with observation, structured speculations, visualisation, imagination, the exploitation of symbol, metaphor and analogy, periods of experimental testing out ideas and possibilities, the representation of experience remade in particular styles, all placed before an audience. In more technical terms both can be understood as a Kantian schema of text, agency and action, history, imagination and practical reasoning that are interconnected and externalised within stable configurations of narrative. Both are mediated in their processes by an Hegelian method of the dialectic, whose procedures articulate a combination of perception with thought, sensation with understanding, in making sense of the world and the place of the subject within that. Underlying this we find an Hegelian sense of Nature as process, activity, becoming and disclosure, that can never be completed but is always evolving in a process without end.

Humanist social documentary photography is surely something with which we are familiar. Yet it is also something about which we can ask new questions. Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics allows us that privilege. In his carefully developed hermeneutic, Ricoeur brings conceptual clarity, method and new understandings, allowing us, as Collingwood says of philosophy, "to know in a different way things which we already knew in some way...".⁵⁴

The thesis is written from the perspective of a professional documentary photographer active in fieldwork, research, publication, exhibition, and until recently teaching.

Key Primary Texts by Paul Ricoeur.

These are the principal books and essays written by Ricoeur that have been used in writing this thesis. They have all been read in translation. Following standard practice, their first citation is named in the body of the thesis and the full reference is given in the page footnotes. They are then referred to by the abbreviations indicated.

⁵³ Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press.

⁵⁴ Collingwood, R.G 1933: *An Essay on Philosophical Method*. Oxford. The Clarendon Press. revised edition with an introduction by James Connelly and Giuseppina D'Oro, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

- 1974: *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics*. ed. Don Ihde. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. (CoI)
- 1975: *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*. Fort Worth. The Texas Christian University Press. (IT)
- 1978: *The Rule of Metaphor: multi-disciplinary studies of the creation meaning in language*. trans. Czerny, R; Blamey, K; Costello, J. Toronto. University of Toronto Press. (RM)
- 1981: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays in Hermeneutics I*. J.B.Thompson (ed). Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. (HSS)
- 1984/85/88: *Time and Narrative*. 3 volumes. Chicago. Chicago University Press. (TN 1/2/3)
- 1986: *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. New York. Columbia University Press.
- 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. NorthWestern University Press. (FTA)
- 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press. (OAA)
- 1995: 'Intellectual autobiography of Paul Ricoeur' in Hahn.L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XX11. Chicago. Open Court. (IAPR)
- 1998: *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. trans by Kathleen Blamey. Cambridge. The Polity Press. (C&C)
- 2005: *The Course of Recognition*. trans. David Pellauer. Harvard. Harvard University Press. (CoR)
- 2006: *History, Memory, Forgetting*. trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press. (HMF)
- 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. trans. David Pellauer. Cambridge. Polity Press. (HWL2)

Secondary texts.

These are the principal authors and secondary texts that I have found most useful. It is not a comprehensive list. Further references will be found throughout the thesis. Their full citation will be given in the page footnotes and will be found in the complete Bibliography at the conclusion of the thesis.

- Agis -Villaverde, Marcelino 2012 (a): *Knowledge and Practical Reason: Paul Ricoeur's way of Thinking*. International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. LiT Verlag. Munster.
- Dauenhauer, Bernard and Pellauer, David: "Paul Ricoeur". The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011) Edward N. Zalta (ed) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/ricoeur/>>
- Ihde, D 1971: *Hermeneutic Phenomenology, The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Evanston. Northwestern University Press.
- Kaplan, David M. (ed) 2008: *Reading Ricoeur*. Albany. State University of New York Press.
- Kearney, R 2004: *On Paul Ricoeur, the Owl of Minerva*. Aldershot. Ashgate.
- Madison, G.B 1994: *Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur*. In Kearney, R 1994: *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol VII1, Continental Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. London. Routledge.
- Pellauer, D 2007: *Ricoeur: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London. Continuum Publishing.
- Pellauer, D 2012: *Looking for the Just*. Etudes Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies. Vol 3. No 1 (2012) pp132-143.
- Reagan, C 1998: *Paul Ricoeur, his life and work*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.
- Thompson, John B. 1981: *Critical Hermeneutics: a study in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1995 edition.

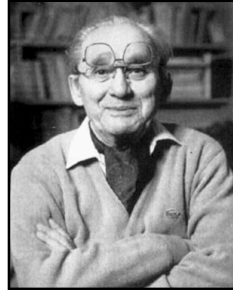
These books and articles have been supplemented by further essays from a variety of writers commentating and analysing aspects of Ricoeur's life, philosophy and

hermeneutics. They are cited individually in the body of the thesis and listed in the bibliography.

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Chapter 2

Paul Ricoeur and critical hermeneutics.



*Fig 2:1: Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005).
(Photo: Anon)*

"Phenomenology is the place where hermeneutics originates, the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics; phenomenology is also the place it has left behind" (Paul Ricoeur 1991/1995).¹

The scope of the chapter.

Looking at the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur as a whole, the immediate impressions are of an extraordinary diversity of enquiries and productivity of output. Ricoeur worked and wrote primarily within the fields of philosophy and religion, including existentialism, phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, ontology, hermeneutics, biblical hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, narrative theory, critical theory, philosophy of action, law and history, moral philosophy and political philosophy, as Kaplan points out (Kaplan 2008: *Reading Ricoeur*).² In practice he kept philosophy apart from religion as separate fields of enquiry, describing them as his two Hellenic Cultures (Ricoeur 2013: *Hermeneutics, Writings and Lectures vol 2*).³ Scratch the surface and it can be seen that the narrative of his life is, in its concrete humanism, within his thought a prolonged meditation upon, and within his person, a mediation of the two domains. Underneath the rippling surface there run some constant currents in the quest for human understanding. In philosophy the most enduring themes are perhaps: the concern for the conscious subject in self-realisation; the hermeneutic understanding that life interprets life; the importance of history and the sense of historical consciousness this brings to us of life being a conversation already begun, something that we briefly join with and that continues when we depart; and the desire to resolve speculative

¹ Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. (Hereafter referred to as FTA).

² Kaplan, David M. (ed) 2008: *Reading Ricoeur*. Albany. State University of New York Press.

³ Ricoeur P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press.

philosophical thought into practical reasoning and pragmatic useable actions for the common good. A 'little ethics' as he calls it (1992: *Oneself as Another*).⁴

In this chapter I am concentrating upon Ricoeur's critical philosophical hermeneutics. Centred in Language and modelled in the theory of the Text, the theory of Action and the theory of History. Ricoeur developed this hermeneutic over an approximately thirty-year period from the late 1960's (Ricoeur 1995: *Intellectual Autobiography*. IA).⁵ I begin with the historical context and a brief survey of Ricoeur's philosophy; Ricoeur's enduring allegiance to Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology; a first engagement with a hermeneutics of the symbol, the proposed double meanings they hold and Freudian psycho-analysis; before moving to his effort to synthesise phenomenology and hermeneutics in Language that arose from the confrontation with linguistic Structuralism, and then to an examination of the critical hermeneutics of the Text and Action, Time and Narrative that he resolved.

The chapter is divided into two Parts.

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⁴ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press. (Hereafter referred to as OAA).

⁵ Ricoeur. P 1995/6: *Intellectual Autobiography* in Hahn. L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court. (Hereafter referred to as IA).

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I have chosen to structure the chapter in this way in an attempt to place Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, which is the principal focus of interest, into a necessary historical context. Not to do so would be a mistake. I find myself agreeing with Ricoeur that history is obligatory mediation to understanding. Whilst it is quite possible to go straight to his critical hermeneutics, without a knowledge of its' antecedents, the scale of his achievement is much diminished. Even so I am not in any sense attempting to write a study embracing all of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy. Nor do I take account of Ricoeur's extensive writings in theology. What I am doing is always looking for mediations between Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the social human being modelled in the notions of text and narrative that are grounded within language, and the pragmatic business of thinking about and making social documentary photography texts and narratives about the social human being, that are grounded within the visual domain.

Part 1

1. Introduction.

Agis-Villaverde suggests Ricoeur's philosophy, overall, can be structured into four broad phases:

1. Formation and influences (up to about 1950).
2. Phenomenology (from about 1950 to about 1960).
3. Hermeneutics (from about 1960 to about 1990).
4. Practical Philosophy (from about 1990 to 2005).

I am concentrating upon Villaverde's phase 3: Hermeneutics, but also having regard to section 4: Practical Philosophy. The phasing needs to be treated with caution, however. The headings indicate currents and themes to which he gave the greater part of his energy at certain times, but the reality is there are no clean breaks from one phase to another. Instead they fuse, blend, advance and double back on themselves as his quest evolved in the flows of his life. They indicate an emphasis and process rather than a divide in moving from one theme to another. (Agis-Villaverde 2012: *Knowledge and Practical Reason: Paul Ricoeur's way of thinking*).⁶

1:2 The philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, a summary.

Paul Ricoeur stands in the tradition of twentieth-century French reflexive philosophy, in which he endearingly identifies himself, with characteristic humility, as a "sort of neo-Kantian, neo-Hegelian" (Ricoeur 1995 IA *ibid*). One whose philosophy journeys by way of Aristotle and classical Greek philosophy, through Kant, Hegel and German idealism, to Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer, Levinas, Habermas and Derrida, and counting amongst his French colleagues at least, from Marcel, Mounier, Nabert and Merleau-Ponty, whilst embracing and absorbing into his thought aspects of Anglo-American analytic language philosophy, particularly the work of Austin and Searle in speech act theory and the notions of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary utterances (Ricoeur 1998: *Critique and Conviction*).⁷

The willingness to learn from another and often opposed tradition of philosophy is distinctive and characteristic of Ricoeur. Where others may hold analytic philosophy to be "...the unconditional rival of phenomenology and hermeneutics..." Ricoeur found there much of value (IA *ibid*. p32-33). In particular the distinction between the pragmatics and semantics of action-sentences, begun by Austin and continued by Searle for the analysis of speech acts, which he had no difficulty in absorbing into his views on the act of

⁶ Agis -Villaverde, Marcelino 2012 (a): *Knowledge and Practical Reason: Paul Ricoeur's way of Thinking*. International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. Vol 5. (ed: Prof. Dr. Dr Andrzej Wiercinski). LiT Verlag. Munster.

⁷ Ricoeur, P 1998: *Critique and Conviction, Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. European Perspectives, a series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism. Lawrence D. Kritzman, editor. New York. Columbia University Press. (Hereafter referred to as CC).

utterance and the involvement of the competent utterer, or author. Utterance is the ‘arena’ as he sees it, in which the ‘fate of the speaking subject unfolded’ (IA. *ibid.*). In this work from analytic philosophy, Ricoeur found a complement of logical semantics that served to strengthen the linguistic semantics that underpins his conception of Discourse that he places central to a critical hermeneutics.

In the field of Action, Ricoeur, from about 1971 onwards, increasingly integrated some of the Anglo-American analyses of action theory into his hermeneutics of human action as a necessary mediation in self-understanding. This transposition of ideas began a journey that lasted a further fifteen years to reach a provisional conclusion in the Gifford Lectures in which he discussed ways of understanding the acting subject, that were published in 1992 as *Oneself as Another*.⁸ This brought to an end the question of the ontology of the Subject in self-realisation and understanding. Hereafter his mind turned to pragmatic questions in the domain of the social imaginary where the ‘little ethics’ that he introduced in the concluding chapters of this book found expression in practical reasoning about issues and problems in the realm of the public good (2013: HWL2).⁹

Style.

Ricoeur’s procedure of work is incremental and developmental, a step-by-step process in which each step is tested and evaluated before moving on to the next. The next step invariably grows from questioning the earlier topic and finding that certain aspects remain unresolved. The unanswered question(s) then form the topic of the next enquiry. As Russell points out elsewhere, this is the procedure of a scientific mind (Russell 1917/1963: *Mysticism and Logic*).¹⁰ Ricoeur’s method of work also owes much to Hegel and the theoretical teleology of fulfilment and Hegel’s method of the three-cornered dialectic that discloses new possibilities in new synthesis between apparent oppositions, and his procedure which follows a Socratic questioning and answering in the rigorous examination of a topic of interest. Out of this arise various polarities, such as that between Explanation and Understanding set up by Dilthey in nineteenth century hermeneutics to legitimate the human social sciences in contrast to the natural sciences. Ricoeur found the setting apart of the two procedures to be obstructive to a full understanding of matters. His resolution demonstrates Ricoeur’s fondness for taking philosophical ideas that apparently stand in opposition such as these two concepts, questioning and mediating between them to a new synthesis and an horizon of understanding that surpasses them both (2013: HWL2 *ibid*). In this case, to a new definition of interpretation that unifies both into a single concept that he formulates as a dialectical process alternating through time between explanation and understanding (1991: *Explanation and Understanding*. FTA *ibid*). His philosophy thus grows holistically and organically, and yet it keeps its feet firmly on the

⁸ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

⁹ Ricoeur P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press. pp 1-44. Hereafter referred to as HWL2.

¹⁰ Russell, Bertrand 1917/1963: *Mysticism and Logic*. London. Unwin Books. George Allen & Unwin.

ground in realities of the meaning, experience and suffering of life lived by the ordinary human being.

By standing back a little, it can be seen that Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics of Language mediates between the 'science' of the linguistic technicalities of grammar and form, and the 'art' of the aesthetics, pleasures and beauties of the poetics of language put to use in making sense of experience, enriching life and making it meaningful. As Ricoeur expressed it, making of it "a life worth living" (IA *ibid*). The aesthetic sensibility is something we all possess as human beings. Not as something separate and set upon a pedestal, but as something implicit in our being, arising in normal, ordinary experience, as Dewey has so fruitfully shown (Dewey 1934/2005: *Art as Experience*),¹¹ and the anthropological literature confirms (Morphy & Perkins 2006: *The Anthropology of Art*).¹² So too is the curiosity that leads to a path of scientific enquiry, both fields expressing the desire to explain and understand, to interpret and giving meaning to and make sense of human experience (O'Hear 1991: *The Philosophy of Science*),¹³ and the desire to give that visual representation (Kemp 2000: *Visualizations*).¹⁴

Ricoeur holds the subjectivity of the self-realising Subject at the heart of his philosophy and his critical hermeneutics, for which history is the obligatory mediation to self-understanding. (HWL2 *ibid*). Hermeneutics and documentary photography both arise within the subjective agency, actions and the productive imagination of the situated subject, a figure that Ricoeur calls the embodied 'capable person' who is anchored in social life and inter-acting with other people and their shared physical, historical and social worlds (IA *ibid*).¹⁵ Ricoeur's hermeneutic, it can be seen, is a form of Kantian schematism modulated through a form of Hegelian dialectic. It is an ontological and epistemological conception of being and knowledge, according to which people are a part of a dynamic, ongoing historical process that requires constant interpretation and re-interpretation. Life and the philosophical hermeneutic arising from it are processes without end, in which the subject being and their perceptions of the ways in which the world *is*, as found and phenomenologically encountered, each reciprocally determine the other, both in varieties of theories about its' nature and through the varieties of practices of daily living.

¹¹ Dewey, J 1934/2005: *Art as Experience*. New York. Perigee/Penguin Group USA. The archaeological record for Norfolk has revealed an Achulean style pear shaped flint hand axe that is carefully flaked around a central fossil shell, provisionally dated to 100,000-200,000 b.c.e; and for South Africa, a piece of red ochre carefully inscribed with a diamond pattern dated to about 77,000 years b.c.e, hinting at how deep rooted an aesthetic sensibility is within the human psyche.

Doubtless our *homo sapiens* and *homo neanderthalensis* forbears used bodily decoration, clothing, masks and other ornamentation in life to beautify and express intricate spiritual beliefs that have not survived, as occurs today. See: Morphy, H & Perkins, M (eds) 2006: *ibid*.

¹² Morphy, H & Perkins, M (eds) 2006: *The Anthropology of Art, a Reader*. Oxford. Blackwell/Wiley.

¹³ O'Hear, A 1991: *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*. Oxford. The Clarendon Press.

¹⁴ Kemp, M 2000: *Visualizations: The Nature Book of Art and Science*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

¹⁵ Ricoeur. P 1995/6: *ibid*.

For these reasons Ricoeur also calls his philosophizing a “philosophical anthropology”. Through and through it is a “philosophy of knowledge in the service of a concrete human being”, as his pupil and collaborator Villaverde expresses it (*ibid* p198).¹⁶

The current runs throughout Ricoeur’s philosophy from the earliest to the latest period and reflects both his personal cultural upbringing, that he describes as having two sides, Greek (philosophical) and Biblical (Protestant theology). It also reflects the tradition of French reflexive philosophy in which he was schooled and worked, albeit influenced by German Idealism (IA *ibid*). Ricoeur refuses the Cartesian doctrine of the *cogito* as an autonomous subject transparent to itself. He is insistent that the self recognises and fulfils itself through mediations in and with the external Other, and the institutions of social life and the diverse fabrications of culture. Ricoeur proposes a doctrine of the subject as being the Self-as-Another, for whom the long journey through history and engagement with the products of culture (European in the case of Ricoeur) is the obligatory path to the discovery of meaning and self understanding (OAA *ibid*). Ricoeur gives his hermeneutics an anthropological explanation and refers to his philosophy as a philosophical anthropology without any absolute, which he held distinct from a philosophy of religion which has an absolute, God, in Protestant theology (IA *ibid*).

Over a seventy year span as a philosopher, Ricoeur was extraordinarily prolific and intellectually curious writing on a broad range of subjects (Reagan 1998: *Paul Ricoeur, his Life and Work*).¹⁷ From amongst this diversity emerges Meaning and Language as the fundamental mediations of knowledge and our natural view of the world (Ricoeur 2013 *ibid*). Language is the foundational mode of our being in the world and constituting it, meaning is the manner of comprehension of our percepts whereby we make sense of it (Agis Villaverde 2010: *ibid*).

It is frequently said that Ricoeur’s greatest contribution to philosophy has been a distinctive development of philosophical hermeneutics, one entirely his own in which he elaborated an interweaving set of enquiries into the ontology of what he thought is a critical property of language: the property of *semantic innovation*. He asks, “How does new meaning come to be, and, in doing so, reconfigure the meanings of (the present and) the past?” (my modification in parenthesis, of Kearney 2004: *Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*. p1).¹⁸ Ricoeur’s philosophy is also empiric in that it shares an important assumption within the traditional French concern for the Subject, and within the parallel German hermeneutics of emancipation. That is, that philosophy must find its place and be linked with everyday life by a concern for meaning and intelligibility in understanding and communication, thought and action, that is directed to the social imaginary and to making a difference to the lives and experience of people in the actual world.

¹⁶ Agis -Villaverde, Marcelino 2012 (a).

¹⁷ Reagan calls Ricoeur’s life, “an intellectual life lived to the full”. Reagan. C 1998: *Paul Ricoeur, his Life and Work*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

¹⁸ Kearney. R 2004: *ibid*

From beginning to end, Ricoeur's is a philosophy in the service of a concrete human being and something constructive, positive and of practical value (Agis Villaverde 2012 *ibid* p193).

Ricoeur, as we have earlier mentioned, wrote on a very wide range of subjects including Phenomenology, Symbolism and Myth, Freud and psychoanalysis, Structuralism, Language philosophy, Analytic philosophy, Deconstruction, Poetics, Historiography, Ethics, Epistemology, Hermeneutics, Political Science, Justice, Theology (Kaplan 2008 *ibid*). Because the range of his work is so broad it would be mistaken to pigeon-hole Ricoeur as such-and-such a philosopher, or the advocate of a particular school. There is however a unity of development and continuities that run through his work, like a chalk stream sometimes disappearing only to re-emerge further along its' journey across the landscape. Philosophy (the Greek) and Theology (the Biblical) are the twin pillars upon which his thought is built. A duality of rational and critical thought alongside biblical studies that he calls his 'twin cultures' that lasted throughout his life. He was much concerned that his philosophical thought be separate from his theological but that each should serve, pragmatically, the needs of practical reasoning in understanding and shaping human affairs, where possible (CC).¹⁹

Through the course of his life, Ricoeur anticipated, debated and engaged with virtually every important school of twentieth-century French and European thought. His way of doing so is distinctive, generous and open minded. Characteristically he engages with others in ways that establish their value and absorbs from them what can serve his own agenda. Where others might proceed by a negative refutation of someone's ideas as imperfect, misguided or simply wrong, and an exhortation that "their way" is the right way that all similarly right-minded people should accept, Ricoeur does not do that. Slow, perhaps, to claim credit for himself, Ricoeur was always meticulous and generous in acknowledging what he owed to other people from all stations in life. In finding value in others he does not disparage but profits from the creative tension that results. Even and especially so when this brings about a rethinking of his own views.

In his method he applies to himself the triadic procedure of the Hegelian dialectic of mediating apparent opposites and in the resulting synthesis of opposing views, more often than not, leaving his own ideas clearer, more defensible, and less vulnerable to charges of insularity and parochialism.²⁰ Linguistic Structuralism and Semiotics is a good example. Whilst critical of its a-historical character and refusal to account for the individual subject, Ricoeur found much in its precepts that was insightful and useful in their abstract hypotheses for understanding what language does and how we can use different language structures and expression in the analysis of specific cases. This he absorbed into his critical hermeneutics, but only as a first, albeit necessary, stage in the journey to a full and

¹⁹ Ricoeur, P 1995 CC *ibid*. p6.

²⁰ Andrews, D 2000: *Tracing Ricoeur*. Diacritics 30:2. Summer 2000 pp43-69.

enriching interpretation and understandings, but not to be accepted as a universal model of explanation. (IA. *ibid*).

A prolific writer, Ricoeur published numerous books, articles and essays. Kearney lists 35 books,²¹ Agis-Villaverde 41 books,²² and at least 200 articles and essays, and Kaplan 30 books and ‘over’ 500 articles.²³ There is not, however a Great Masterwork, a book or small series of volumes that synthesises his whole philosophy into a totality. He did not see that as his purpose, as he himself said in conversation.²⁴

In producing his work Ricoeur, we can see, is again following Hegel with a method of proceeding by the examination of a topic step-by-step, incrementally developing his thought through the process.²⁵ His essays lay out his ideas and progress before us. Thus we see both the phenomenological object and process in play. He calls it his bit-by-bit approach. A topic is examined with rigour and his thought about it laid before us in a published essay or series of essays. Typically the essays will each conclude with another question raised and to be examined in a further essay. Periodically he felt he had sufficient results to justify gathering together his thoughts into a book.²⁶ Again the book, typically, will not be definitive but leave questions unanswered and the door open to new ideas and new revisions.²⁷ Other people, his students and collaborators, have gathered together the essays from diverse journals and publications with his approval and sometimes his own added commentary, and placed them into a series of publications, for example the collection published as *From Text to Action* which contains essays central to the evolution of his critical hermeneutics.²⁸

It has been said that philosophers exist to ask questions, not to answer them. Ricoeur died in 2005 aged 92 years. His questioning has often been profound, and his hermeneutic of the text, and by extension, text-analogues (in which I include photo-documentary narrative) has moved our understanding onto a new plane. He made no attempt to build a grand all-embracing philosophical system but to participate forcefully in a conversation. Ricoeur’s work has, overall, the character of a philosophy under construction, a conversation that had already begun which he joined and contributed to and invites us to enter into as well; and a quest that was still being pursued wherein separate problems are laid out and examined, piecemeal, until his death. Reagan has called Ricoeur’s life, an “intellectual life lived to the full”.²⁹ We can only and humbly agree.

²¹ Kearney. R 2004: *On Paul Ricoeur, the Owl of Minerva*. Aldershot. Ashgate.

²² Agis-Villaverde (*ibid*)

²³ Kaplan, David M. (ed) 2008: *Reading Ricoeur*. Albany. State University of New York Press.

²⁴ Ricoeur 1995/1998 CC (*ibid*).

²⁵ Russell calls such a procedure the hallmark of scientific method. Russell, Bertrand 1917/1963: *Mysticism and Logic*. London. George Allen & Unwin.

²⁶ For example: Ricoeur, P 1984, 1985, 1988: *Time and Narrative*. 3 volumes. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

²⁷ Ricoeur, P [1995]/1998: (*ibid*) CC.

²⁸ For example: Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. Hereafter referred to as FTA.

²⁹ Reagan. C 1998: *Paul Ricoeur, his life and work*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

Ricoeur's work continues today, post-mortem, through the work and membership of his archive held at the Ricoeur Study and Research Centre, "Fonds Ricoeur", Paris,³⁰ and their active promotion of research and conferences held internationally to discuss and broaden the application of his thought, and by the Society for Ricoeur Studies and the peer reviewed journal 'Ricoeur Studies'.³¹

1:3 Hermeneutic philosophy in the twentieth-century.

Three major figures bestride twentieth-century philosophical hermeneutics: Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. In their hands, hermeneutics (the philosophy of interpretation) is closely associated with Phenomenology and with Language. Hermeneutics is broadly defined as *interpretive activity* based upon the existential thesis that life interprets life and that human existence is, itself, a mode of interpretation, *hermeneia*.

Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology can be defined as the dream of a science of philosophy without presuppositions. Hermeneutics can be defined at its most basic level as the interpretation of and making Sense of things in human experience (the hermeneutical question, par excellence). The primary subject matter is Meaning and the interpretation of Language and language phenomena in speech, writing and reading. It also embraces other forms of representational inscription whose properties are similar to those of a written linguistic text that can be de-coded, and in a similar way, "read" with meaningful understanding.³²

The hermeneutic interest in Language reflects the wider twentieth-century philosophical preoccupation with language and the belief that language is the distinctive way human beings rationalise and shape their understandings of the exterior world and the inner mind. Language is regarded as the distinctively human exercise of the mind shaping and understanding metaphysical, scientific, emotional and artistic beliefs about the world, ourselves and our place in the order of things. The philosophy of language in the Anglo-American analytic tradition is informed by the belief that language is the fundamental basis of all philosophical problems since it needs to give an account of what it is in our experience and understandings that enable us to use language. A belief given impetus by Wittgenstein with his notion of 'language games', but also manifested in diverse forms of logical positivism and the verification principle; and the wider ranging analytic philosophy of language embracing semiotics, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, in the quest for a general understanding of the elements of a working language, the relationship of the understanding speaker to its components, and the relationship they bear to the

³⁰ Ricoeur, P: Fonds Ricoeur, The Ricoeur Archive and Research Study Centre, Paris. <www.fondsricoeur.fr>

³¹ Ricoeur, P: The Society for Ricoeur Studies. <www.ricoeursociety.org>.

³² Ricoeur was particularly attracted to architecture in this respect. Not only Classical but it is tempting also, to recall in the C19th Ruskin and 'The Stones of Venice' and in the C20th the work of Le Corbusier and Modernist architecture to be 'read' as 'machines for living'. See Chapter 8 *Aesthetic Experience*, in - Ricoeur, P [1995]/1998: *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. trans by Kathleen Blamey. Cambridge. The Polity Press.

world, to be seen, for example, in the work of Austen and later Searle (Austen 1962: *How to do things with Words*).³³

Hermeneutics also becomes closely associated with Perception, with perceptual phenomena and sensory interpretive activity. The Cartesian notion of the doubting Subject introspectively transparent to itself through consciousness and self-realisation is questioned and refused. The notion of the Subject-as-Self remains central to philosophical concern, but this subject is embodied in nature and very much part of and a product of the world in which they inhabit. For Heidegger and Gadamer hermeneutics becomes an ontology of universal being and understanding. For Ricoeur in his critical but amplifying hermeneutic, hermeneutics is centred as an epistemology that does something, informing action, practical reasoning and use in the world.

Each of the three primary figures, in their different ways, follow the example of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, who, in the nineteenth-century began to reshape hermeneutics away from a narrow preoccupation with the interpretation of biblical and scriptural texts to a broader, holistic attitude that called for a total literary, historical and humanistic examination of all texts. At the same time the notion of what constituted “a text” expanded. For example, with the metaphorical idea of there being a “Book of Nature” which science and philosophy must investigate and learn to “read”; to the idea of critically “reading” and interpreting all human social and cultural activities and products.³⁴ Kant argued in the first *Critique* that mind, mentality as such and pure understanding of the transcendental ego makes nature, it does not create nature. It is not arbitrary or irrational but essentially a rational and necessary product of the human way of looking at things. We cannot stand outside of ourselves and view things dispassionately. There can be no knowledge of anything transcendent that he called the *noumenon*. The knowledge we have is the product of intuition, our senses and an intelligent and thoughtful perception. Therefore, according to Kant, what we know is phenomenal appearance only (“sense data”) and that we know inductively. If we want to know what the mind really is in itself, said Kant, “act and you will find out”.³⁵

Hegel’s idealism differed from Kant. In his *Phenomenology of Mind*, Book 2, Hegel argued that Nature is real and not in any sense a matter of mere appearance and something that exists simply because we think it. For Hegel the concept of “Nature” is of something that really exists independently of any mind whatsoever. Nature is external and reality is the external world. What he means is that in the world everything is external to everything

³³ Austen, J. L 1962: *How to do things with Words*. The William James Lectures delivered in Harvard University in 1955. 2nd edition, edited by J.O.Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Oxford at the Clarendon Press. Oxford University Press.

³⁴ Madison, G. B 1994: *Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur*. pp290-349 in Kearney, R (ed) 1994: *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*. Routledge History of Philosophy Vol VIII. London & New York. Routledge.

³⁵ Collingwood, R.G 1945: (*ibid*)

else. It is a realm of outwardness. This renders the historical distinction of Mind opposed to empirical Matter as untenable. As humans we are of nature, embodied, and nature is of us, although we have the distinction of self-consciousness and being able to distance ourselves from ourselves and from nature, observing, analysing, evaluating possible explanations, understanding and making it meaningful.

Furthermore, Hegel's concept of Nature is a concept of pure activity. Nature is always a process of becoming, of disclosure trying to become something definite, yet whose convergence upon its own goal scarcely ever altogether succeeds in being itself.³⁶ Thus a bud develops into a blossom that develops into an apple; an egg develops into a chick that develops into a fledging that develops into a soaring golden eagle; the infant becomes a child who becomes an adult, who ages and finally decays. Yet each may be similar but each are not the same as their forbearers. Each is similar in process but not identical in physical or genetic make-up, not even apples from the same tree, and thus evolution has room in which to work to modify and adapt biological forms to their environment.

It is an old idea traceable back to Heraclitus in 4th century B.C and Aristotle, who in Book 2 of *Rhetoric* suggested there are Three Ages of Man: youth, prime of life, and old age.³⁷ The idea remained hugely influential in medieval European writing and thought,³⁸ and Shakespeare in 1599/1600 rendered it anew as the Seven Ages of Man in *As You Like It*: the infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon, and finally, sans, a non-entity.³⁹ In twentieth-century British structural-functional anthropology Fortes was particularly influential in giving the notion new impetus in the form of lineage descent-theory and an essential element of the dynamic life cycle of inter-generational familial kinship relations structuring a cohesive and stable corporate society. An historical, diachronic doctrine standing in opposition to the a-historical, synchronic, Structuralist alliance theories of kinship and marriage advocated by Levi-Strauss.⁴⁰

Nature, in Hegel, is therefore a tendency and nothing in science fully describes what it is. Not because our scientific methods and descriptions are poor and in need of correction, but because there is always an element of indeterminacy, of potentiality not yet resolved and realised into a perfect actuality. Even quantum physics would seem to be a limitless regression into the perplexities of matter and anti-matter.

Ricoeur laid great stress upon Language and Texts as "*ordered creations*". That is, put together under certain rules and procedures. Perhaps we can say that Ricoeur found a path to mediating the tension between these opposing Kantian and Hegelian metaphysics in the apparent certainty of a hermeneutic constructed around Language and the written word,

³⁶ Collingwood, R.G 1945: (*ibid*).

³⁷ Aristotle: *The Art of Rhetoric*. Collins Classics. Harper Press 2012.

³⁸ Burrows, J.A 1986: *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought*. Oxford. The Clarendon Press.

³⁹ I am greatly amused by finding myself aged somewhere between Justice and Pantaloon!

⁴⁰ Fortes, Meyer 1990: *Time and Social Structure and Other Essays*. London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology 40. Amhurst. Humanities Press.

inscribed in time and space within the narratives and poetics of the Text. A certainty that was grammatically ordered, methodical, and with rules of procedure, that provided a discourse of knowledge that was imaginative, open to new forms of expression and new levels of meaning, whilst remaining intelligible, useful and communicable to any others who could read the script. A sense of certainty he captured within his formula *The World of the Text*, and his formula for defining hermeneutic discourse as “...the act of someone saying something, about something to someone...”, that, as he says “makes life worth living”.

Schleiermacher and Dilthey both returned hermeneutics to its classical sense of the Word, “to say” and “to interpret”, *hermeneuein*, the bringing into word what was not yet word. From this birth comes language, from which are derived meaning and multiple meanings, the explaining of matters as in bringing them to understanding, and the science and art of interpretation and the analysis of all possible types of human utterance.⁴¹

Dilthey also gave a new dimension to hermeneutics situated at the level of epistemology and the claim to scientific status. Three things were at issue: first, the need to defend the autonomy of the human sciences; second, to establish their different methods of proceeding. To do this he divided hermeneutics into a hermeneutic of “explanation” as the method of the natural sciences, and a hermeneutic of “understanding” as the method of the emerging social sciences of sociology and anthropology. Third, there was the question of grounding this epistemological difference in a fundamental property of mental life, namely, the power of a subject to enter into the mental life of an alien Other. This was held to be possible on the grounds that, psychologically, we are all similar human beings, despite our cultural differences.⁴² To achieve this indicated a move of hermeneutics from a strictly epistemological method of interpretation to a neo-Kantian transcendental interrogation of the conditions of possibility for hermeneutics.

Weber absorbed Dilthey’s use of hermeneutic understanding, *verstehen*, into his development of Sociology, notably in his examination of the Protestant work ethic underlying the rise of European industrialisation and capitalism.⁴³ A study that, along with his other sociological works, hugely influenced, through Franz Boas, the twentieth-century development of American cultural anthropology centred at Columbia University; and in British structural-functional,⁴⁴ and symbolic schools of anthropology,⁴⁵ informed the classic ethnographic fieldwork methodology of participating observation.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ihde, D 1998: *Expanding hermeneutics: Visualism in Science*. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. pp9-11.

⁴² A similar sentiment that informed the creation of the photographic exhibition, *The Family of Man*, by Edward Steichen in 1955, made in the ‘Cold War’ period of global confrontation and threat of total nuclear annihilation. See: Steichen, E 1955: *The Family of Man*. New York. The Museum of Modern Art.

⁴³ Weber, Max 1905: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Penguin Classics 2002.

⁴⁴ As taught at Cambridge University and the London School of Economics, for example.

⁴⁵ As taught at Oxford University, for example.

⁴⁶ Erickson, Paul. A & Murphy, Liam, D 1998: *A History of Anthropological Theory*. Ontario. Broadview Press.

By the end of the nineteenth century hermeneutics had become humanistic, linked to the problem of human and historical understanding. The principles of hermeneutics were to be understood, now, as basic to any kind of textual and historical understanding.⁴⁷

1:4 Phenomenology.

By the early years of the twentieth-century the single most influential, albeit indirect, influence on the development of contemporary hermeneutics has been Husserl's philosophy of Phenomenology, perhaps best expressed in the *Cartesian Meditations*, wherein Descartes's *ego cogito* and reductive principle of "doubt" served as a foil for his thinking upon phenomenology.⁴⁸ Phenomenology is a philosophical position that emphasises Consciousness and the through consciousness and the body the direct experience of the world. It stands opposed to philosophical positions that emphasise mental abstractions and Idealism. That is philosophies that set up an opposition of Mind and Matter in such a way that the world is seen as a construction of the Mind. Husserl held that the phenomena of the actual "lived world" - *lebenswelt* - must be the basis of philosophical reflection.

Husserl sought for some absolute transcendental grounding from which to build, step by step, a universal philosophical science. To achieve this he proposed the method of "the phenomenological reduction" - *epoche* - in which all conventional assumptions are set aside. He called this "bracketing" and included the question of the very existence of an object or impression that is central to the mind : matter debate.

To do so he sought to unify the traditions of rationalism and empiricism in facing the afresh the challenge posed to philosophy by science, of how our natural view of the world that we live in and experience day by day in common sense, is related to the apparently dispassionate and verifiable authority of scientific knowledge.⁴⁹

Intentionality.

Intentionality is central to Husserl's phenomenology. By this he means the *intentionality of consciousness*. It is the fact of living in the world that our consciousness is always focused upon something outside of itself. Husserl phrased this as: "...consciousness is always consciousness of something...". Consciousness allows us to appreciate experience. Thus, the mind does not create reality *but interacts with it*. Intentionality offers the means of seeing the relationship between the subject and the object, and is, in consequence, regarded as being more fundamental than a position on either side of the mind : matter dualism. Merleau-Ponty emphasised perception in his philosophy, arguing that we

⁴⁷ Madison. G.B 1994: *Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur*. In Kearney, R 1994: *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol VIII, Continental Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. London. Routledge.

⁴⁸ Husserl, E 1977 (1929): *Cartesian Meditations: an introduction to Phenomenology*. Trans. D Cairns. Martinus Nijhoff.

⁴⁹ Gadamer, H. G 1966: *The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem*. In Gadamer 1977: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. (Trans and Ed) by David E. Linge. Berkeley. University of California Press.

perceive the world as an interacting multiplicity of intentions.⁵⁰ The social theorist, Alfred Schutz in his theories of the phenomenology of social worlds argued that phenomenology places an emphasis on the subjective and common-sense nature of people's perceptions and assumptions about the life-world they inhabit. Schütz's main concerns were with understanding how people grasp the consciousness of others whilst living within their own stream of consciousness and the social nature of knowledge. People, he argued, create their social realities looking to the present, to the past and into the future. The 'life-world' created is not free but constrained by existing factors, such as geographic, environmental, social, economic, political. Nonetheless people can and do interact with each other and their inherited worlds in ways that are both traditional and dynamic in multiple ways that are, in their nature, dialectical.⁵¹ Schutz greatly influenced Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics as an epistemology of the lived world whose dialectical discourse is grounded in consciousness, action and inter-action with others in a shared world.

Language.

The second most influential factor for Husserl, was a return to the centrality of Language to human being. The condition of a linguistic phenomenology expressed best, perhaps, in the hermeneutic motto "Man is Language".⁵² The problematic, for Husserl, took shape within the existing language and terminology of Modern, post-Descartes, philosophy. The problem to overcome was two fold: the opposition between Mind and Matter, expressed as Subject and Object; and the related problem of epistemology and how knowledge is constituted for us.

Husserl was not alone in his concerns. We have noted the wider twentieth-century preoccupation with the philosophy of language. Russell, for example, at much the same period also became interested in the theory of knowledge, in his case with those parts of psychology and of linguistics that seemed to him relevant to the subject. In 1911 he proposed his celebrated inferential theory of knowledge by acquaintance and by description (Russell 1911);⁵³ and re-stated in 1948 as a central problem of philosophy as, "The question is not what can we *know*, but what can we *know*?" (Russell 1948).⁵⁴ The new interest marked, for him, what he describes as "...a more or less permanent change in my philosophical interests..." that led him towards a flirtation with logical positivism and the effort to synthesise science and empiricism, and resulted in three books.⁵⁵ He did so with a number of prejudices in his mind, two of the most significant being, first, a questioning of the term "experience" which he thought over-emphasised, especially in

⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, M 1945: *The Phenomenology of Perception*. trans Smith, C. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

⁵¹ Schutz, Alfred 1932/1967: *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston. Illinois. Northwestern University Press.

⁵² Gadamer H.G 1966: *Man and Language* (*ibid*).

⁵³ Russell, Bertrand 1911: *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description*. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. 11.

⁵⁴ Russell, Bertrand 1948: *Human Knowledge: Its scope and limits*. London. George Allen & Unwin.

⁵⁵ Russell, B: *The Analysis of Mind* (1921); *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940); *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (1948).

Idealist philosophy and many forms of empiricism, insisting that people (we/us/you and me) accept innumerable propositions about things not directly experienced. Second, that knowledge of what there is in the world if not known through perception or memory, must be inferred from premises, of which one, at least, is known by perception or memory. On the understanding that there can be no wholly a-priori method of proving the existence of anything, but that there are forms of probable inference which must be accepted, although they cannot be proven inductively by experience as Hume already had demonstrated.⁵⁶

In summary:

What Phenomenology showed to Husserl's apparent satisfaction was the "...ultimate indubitability of the World...". Husserl's method of the eidetic reduction, bracketing, showed that, "...givens' are in fact constituted by a complex process, and are not simplex...". What the matter of Subjectivity now showed, he said, was "...a revealed inter-subjectivity of the transcendental...". Husserl translated this notion into the motto that came to almost define phenomenology: that consciousness of the subject is not a matter of introspective transparency, but "*...consciousness is always consciousness of something...*". Consciousness is directed outside of itself and turned towards sense. The eidetic reduction then leads consciousness to being-for -itself in reflection. Sense is placed at a distance in the phenomenological epoche, from the 'lived' to which we adhere in everyday terms. So in terms of perception, "*...to perceive is to perceive something...*"; of Imagination, "*...to imagine is to imagine something...*" and so on and so forth.⁵⁷

Intentionality II.

As we have seen, central to Husserl's Phenomenology is the doctrine of *Intentionality*. This has two aspects. The first is on the explicit level of understanding: an intention to give a literal description of the reference or object of the directed nature of consciousness. Husserl saw this as interpretation that is simply a descriptive psychology of conscious processes, and, for him, rather shallow. The second aspect lies deeper, and for Husserl, holds the true significance of its phenomenological function. Ihde gives this as: "*...Intentionality may be described as the Foundational Correlation Rule of Phenomenology...*". In this deeper sense, intentionality is thus ontological. It postulates the conditions of possibility of there being either "Subject" or "Object", or, for that matter, "World". Subject and object arise in what Husserl calls the "*...correlation a-priori which began as intentionality...*". Thus for Husserl intentionality is neither epistemological nor psychological. Neither "Subject" nor "Object" make sense in and of itself. Each term can exist only in correlation with the other, its opposite as a binary. Thus neither term can be dealt with in isolation. Ihde comments that the whole notion of Husserlian phenomenology revolves around this central correlation scheme (*ibid*).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Russell, Bertrand 1959: *Theory of Knowledge* ChX1 in *My Philosophical Development*. London. George Allen & Unwin. Pp128-133.

⁵⁷ Ihde 1998 (*ibid*).

⁵⁸ Ihde 1998 (*ibid*).

By following this rule of procedure, according to Husserl any area of possible knowledge whatsoever, is located and described as we experience it. As Matthews expresses it, "...this world was not a world of inner consciousness but the 'life-world', *Lebenswelt*, the pre-scientific and pre-philosophical but fully external world in which we act and have our being..." (Matthews 1996: *Twentieth-century French Philosophy*. p88).⁵⁹ Thus, in the eidetic reduction, Husserl states the procedure is to begin with what is familiar, accepted as a 'given', then placing that into mental 'brackets', removing it from all received associations and categorisations. The abstract object is now held at a distance from the analyst, to be examined and systematically de-constructed, taken apart layer upon layer. This process of archaeology is supposed to reveal two things: a) the pristine object; b) the process of deconstruction and comprehension. Thus both the object and the process by which the object is constituted are discovered (Ihde. *ibid*). As might be imagined, this is not at all easy.

It works like this. First there is the correlation of what Husserl calls "*noema*" and "*noesis*". This simply means: *noema* is *that which is experienced*. This is the *object-correlate*, the *what* of experience.

Noesis is how the 'what' is experienced, the process of experiencing, or the activity of experiencing. This is the *subject-correlate*. Thus there can be no *noema* without *noesis*. There is nothing which is present as evidenced unless it is present to experience. This can be easily visualised:

Noesis - Noema

Husserl later in the *Meditations* adds a third element, a specific carrier of the act of mediation. This he calls "*ego*", and he also changes the language in which the correlation is now expressed:

Ego - Cogito - Cogitatum

Thus there can be no activity of experience without an *Ego*, the active thinking of the *cogito* and something which is thought, the *cogitatum*.

Interesting consequences flow from Husserl's structural conception of intentionality within phenomenology. On the side of the object-correlate there can be no such thing as a "wordless" reference. There may be doubt cast on how to interpret the world, but that there is a world to be interpreted, that is, referents constantly present to experience, cannot be doubted. A constant presence of something-that-is-there exists, be that mouse or mountain. The sense of the world is primordially the sense of a phenomenological presence of something, and this is held as indubitable as the sensing ego.

On the side of the "subject-correlate" there is, unexpectedly, a negative result. There can be no subject without a World. Neither can there be any subject that is immediately transparent to itself. Within the phenomenological correlation the Subject (Self) is

⁵⁹ Matthews, E 1996: *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy*. Oxford. Opus Books. Oxford University Press.

deprived of its singular immediacy, and of its presumed self-realisation. Put in a positive light this means something of huge import and goes to the heart of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. It is this: "*The subject can now know itself only by means of the world*". Phenomenology brought hermeneutics to reflect upon the conditions of its own possibility and the hermeneutical claim to universality and method of general understanding.

There is an inherent flaw in Husserl's procedure. The phenomenological project takes place within existing language. His method allows language to retain its non-neutrality. This occurs because the object is situated already in a language that is value laden with categories and terminology notwithstanding the eidetic reduction. It must be so if the new understandings given through the reduction are to be articulated and made intelligible to others. The findings must be open to all who can read or comprehend the language being used to express things through, not just in the mind of the experiencing subject. The alternative to using existing language is to devise a wholly new language, an Esperanto of some kind. Critics of Husserl thus dismissed phenomenology as an inherently idealistic metaphysic, anchored in the subjectivity of the analyst and a philosophy whose domain extended no further than psychology, a domain inherently problematic notwithstanding the efforts of Freud, Jung, Adler and their followers.⁶⁰ It is a problem Husserl was unable to resolve.

1:5 Ricoeur and symbolic hermeneutics.

Ricoeur's critical philosophical hermeneutic is grounded within Phenomenology, Language, the question of Meaning and what he calls the 'enigma of semantic innovation'. That is the creation and interpretation of multiple levels of meaning and of new meanings through language. The questions Ricoeur asks are, how do we account for overflows of meaning that work at different levels of understanding, how do new meanings come into existence, and how do we understand them when shaping our interpretations of the world in which we live and the historical world from which we have emerged (2013: HWL2 *ibid*).

In answer Ricoeur sought to unify phenomenology with the philosophy of hermeneutics. Grounded since the Middle Ages in the interpretation of biblical and scriptural texts hermeneutics was given greater force within the scholarship of eighteenth and nineteenth century German Higher Criticism, and the work of scholars such as Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Feuerbach (1804-1872), and Dilthey in hermeneutics and the philosophy of the humanities (1833-1911). Feuerbach, for example, argued for a materialist humanism and proposed that being in consciousness is consciousness of the infinity of his own nature (1854: *The Essence of Christianity*). Dilthey sought for a philosophical legitimization of the human sciences, arguing that the hermeneutic circle of the movement between the

⁶⁰ Jung, C.G 1963: *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe. Trans by R & C Winston. London. Collins and Routledge & Kegan Paul.

implicit and the explicit must, in a 'scientific' theory of Nature, be completed with a theory of how the world is given to human beings through symbolically mediated practices. Ricoeur absorbed from these and others what was of value to him but not uncritically. The breadth of the problem of interpretation, he states, only became clear to him bit-by-bit. His thinking about hermeneutics developed slowly, in stages over time and each step forward on the occasion of a particular and limited problem to be resolved (2013: HWL2 *ibid*).

During the 1950's Ricoeur developed a hermeneutic paradigm of double meanings within symbols and myths. He began with a study of the problem of the Will. He did so with the intention of giving a practical counterpart to the theorising of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*⁶¹ This brought his attention to symbolism and the limited problem of the symbols of evil. In what has become known as 'a hermeneutics of suspicion', symbols, he realised held a double meaning. A simple literal meaning lying on the surface with strata of double meanings lying beneath that and hidden from direct perception. These could be accessed and interpreted only by thought whose starting point is the literal symbol. Similar 'suspicions' of double meanings hidden behind appearances are to be found in the work of Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud. In Feuerbach suspicion centres upon Christianity as a creed of so many false doctrines. In Nietzsche, in the will to power and achievement and suspicion of all doctrines that oppose or dilute that. In Marx suspicion revolves upon with the supposed historical alienation of working class people 'trapped' unknowingly by the hidden processes and institutions of a capitalist political and economic system of governance. With Freud the suspicions are of an infantile state of mind and neuroses about sexuality hidden within the subconscious. The study of Freud and Freudian analysis of dreams proved to be of critical importance to Ricoeur. Freudian analysis is reductive and proceeds through a process of regression performed by an analyst upon a patient taking them back to infancy, whose findings there are manifest in adult neuroses and/or dreams. To overcome them requires interpretation by their projection onto the person of the analyst.

Ricoeur found himself critical of Freudian thought and explanation. He called the therapeutic reductive, "an archaeology of the *cogito*" whose method involves a process of peeling back layer upon stratified layer of the psyche, reducing the patient to a core trauma and neurotic condition. In the interpretive section of his analysis Ricoeur confronted the discourse of psychoanalysis with the discourse of phenomenology and reflexive philosophy and presented the polar opposition he found there as a regressive movement towards the infantile and archaic on one side, and a progressive movement directed towards a *telos* of a signifying fulfilment on the other. Ricoeur represented Freudian psychoanalysis as one of a mixed discourse, that threw together the language of

⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty, M 1945: *The Phenomenology of Perception*. trans Smith, C. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

force (drive, repression, displacement etc) and the language of meaning (thought, wish, interpretation).

He justified his interpretation of Freudian thought by reference to the mixed nature of its object, which he situated at a point of inflexion of desire and language. A reductive methodology alone did not give the full picture. In contrast to Freud's methodology, Ricoeur, for the first time, took from Hegel and *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, the *telos* of a progressive movement towards spiritual fulfilment. Hegel presents the spirit as moving from the sparsest of meanings towards the richest in an expansive movement to a fulfilling and meaningful life. Ricoeur saw here a teleology of the self-conscious *cogito* that was emancipating and dialectic, in which the truth of a 'figure' was contained within the one that followed, in a process of continual disclosure about the world and the living subject (IA: *ibid*).

For Ricoeur this meant there were now open to him alternative hermeneutic paths, a hermeneutics of 'suspicion', in the German tradition, and a hermeneutics of neo-Hegelian 'fulfilment' to be found in the French reflexive tradition of Nabert, in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, and in the German hermeneutics of Gadamer. Ricoeur chose the Hegelian path of openness, disclosure and transformation for his own version of hermeneutics.

1:6 Symbolism into language

In this mood a new phase of work followed upon the study he made of Freud (Ricoeur 1970: *Freud and Philosophy*).⁶² Previously he had concentrated on the hermeneutics of one particular set of symbols, those associated in ancient Greek, Hebraic and Babylonian texts dealing with the symbolism of evil and guilt (Ricoeur 1967: *The Symbolism of Evil*).⁶³ Now Ricoeur expanded his hermeneutic to Language, and opened it to the notion of *the symbolic structure as a specific structure of language*. As a structure of language, there is, he says, "...hermeneutics, that is interpretation, wherever there are found expressions where a second meaning is unfolded from a first meaning...". As a structure of language, a hermeneutic meditation upon symbols begins from language that already exists and entails thinking from the linguistic presuppositions held in the symbol. (Husserlian Phenomenology attempts to neutralise language and free interpretation from any linguistic presuppositions) (2013: *ibid*).

1:7. Structuralism-from symbolism to critical hermeneutics.

The intellectual challenge of Structuralism introduced the next phase of Ricoeur's development of hermeneutics and a paradigm shift from symbolism to a hermeneutics of Language and the Text. The influence of post-Saussurean doctrines of linguistic Structuralism, Semiotics, and of the sciences of language, was spreading throughout European thought within the humanities and social sciences in the years following WWII.

⁶² Ricoeur, P 1970: *Freud and Philosophy: an Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven. Yale University Press.

⁶³ Ricoeur, P 1967: *The Symbolism of Evil*. Trans. Emerson Buchanan. Boston. Beacon.

Structuralism proposes itself as an objective and universal model of explanation applicable across a wide range of disciplines and enquiries. So for example, in semiology (Barthes 1957: *Mythologies*);⁶⁴ in semiotics (Greimas 1966: *Structural Semantics*;⁶⁵ in literary criticism (Genette 1980: *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*),⁶⁶ in French anthropology (Levi-Strauss 1963: *Structural Anthropology*).⁶⁷ All of these authors confine themselves to the structure of the text or text-analogue alone, without reference to the intentions of the author, (forshadowing the curious notions of the ‘intentional fallacy’ and presumed ‘death of the author’ proposed by Barthes in a 1968 essay, who argued that in the interpretation of a text, the written text and its’ creator are unrelated),⁶⁸ or in the case of Levi-Strauss, the actors involved. Ricoeur suggests that Structuralism wrought a Kunhnian paradigm change within French philosophy (1995 IA *ibid*).

The claim to be universal posed for Ricoeur an intellectual challenge and a polemic conflict. The critique Structuralism posed European and French neo-Kantian reflexive philosophy was aimed, in Ricoeur’s view, at existentialism and diverse philosophies of existence, and all philosophies of the subject.⁶⁹ Heidegger became a particular target, with his followers making a shift in their attention away from an existential reading of *Being and Time*, (that Ricoeur though to be mistaken anyway), to his works produced in the 1930s following the so-called “Turn” (*Kehre*) in his thought. In these works, Heidegger focuses upon the question of language and a fascination with poetry, and the exegesis of philosophical and literary texts, especially those of the Pre-Socratics but also by Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Holderlein. Heidegger’s later works are held by his supporters to have removed any sense of the subject ego. They were placed in opposition to the alleged humanism of his earlier phenomenological hermeneutic philosophies (1995 IA *ibid*).

The thesis of Structuralism and its’ offshoot Semiotics, is that hidden within language are structures which operate without our consciously being aware of them (Tallis 1999: *Enemies of Hope*).⁷⁰ Language was reduced to the functioning of a system of signs without anchorage in a subject. The language system mirrored, it is supposed, the functioning of neural structures of the mind. Chomsky, for example, argued that sequences of words, utterances, in speech have a syntax that is characterised by a formal,

⁶⁴ Barthes, R 1957/1972: *Mythologies*. Trans. A Lavers. London. Paladin.

⁶⁵ Greimas, A.J 1966: *Structural Semantics: an attempt at method*. Trans. McDowell, Schleifer & Velie. Lincoln. Nebraska University Press.

⁶⁶ G. Genette 1980: *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*. Trans J. Lewin. Forward J.Culler. Reprint edition. Cornell University Press.

⁶⁷ Levi-Strauss, C 1963: *Structural Anthropology*. London. Allen Lane.

⁶⁸ Barthes, R 1977: *Image, Music, Text*. trans Heath, S. New York, Hill & Wang.

⁶⁹ French reflexive philosophy at its most radical is concerned with the possibility of self-understanding as the subject of the operations of willing, knowing and evaluating. Kant says “the ‘I think’ must be able to accomnay all my representations”. Reflection is the act by which a subject turns back upon itself and in a moment of intellectual clarity and moral responsibility, recognise the unifying principle amongst which it is dispersed and ‘forgets itself as a subject’. (Ricoeur 1991: *On Interpretation*. FTA *ibid*). This bears a remarkable similarity to Cartier-Bresson’s definition of the decisive moment in photography (*ibid* below).

⁷⁰ Tallis. R 1999: *Enemies of Hope, a critique of contemporary pessimism, irrationalism, anti-humanism and counter-Enlightenment*. 2nd Edition. London. MacMillan.

generative grammar that is context-free, reflecting unconscious mental operations of the functional mind. This would account, in his view, for the creativity of language and the ability of a speaker-hearer of a language to spontaneously produce new utterances, and interpret and understand an infinite number, including new and novel ones, in communication with others (Chomsky 1957: *Syntactic Structures*).⁷¹ Greimas working in the field of semiotics developed the notion of the 'The Greimas Square', a narrative programme that sought to bring together two fields of operations that he called a semantic universe and a discourse universe. These are held to consist of signs in webs of meaning (semantics), and webs of extended cultural use and modification (discourse), spread across multiple layers of the social imaginary. Greimas proposed that in narrative and narratology the semiotic webs are or can be made tangible in written and spoken (transcribed) texts, some of which become culturally iconic (Greimas 1966: *ibid*).

Structuralism is a theory of abstract, hypothetical relations between points in a system from which anything of an extra-linguistic nature is barred. In Saussurean linguistics the points are designated Signs. Saussure's linguistics is concerned with speech (others extended it to written language and beyond). In Saussure's syntactic analysis of the phonetic system of speech, the signs have no meaning, there are only differences operating within a system of internal relations. Signs have a binary structure. On one side is the concept designated, the signified, and on the other the form which the sign takes, the signifier. The binary relationship constitutes the signification of the sign. Barthes terms these aspects denotation and connotation. The semiotic strain of linguistic structuralism begins with the word as sign aligned to a denotation, to which connotations can be linked. Thus for Barthes *haute couture* clothes are a sign. Their denotation is fashion, their connotation is style and fashionability. In written language the word as sign has only the limited semantic content of a dictionary, but language in use by the human subject does more, and overflows with meaning. There is a surplus of meaning within a written text that a semiotics of the word struggles to account for.

The problem as Ricoeur clearly sees is that the primary unit of meaning in language is not the lexical sign, the word, but the sentence. A sentence contains the synthetic act of predication and forms a basic unit or utterance of discourse. I hold that the single photograph fulfils a similar function as an illocutionary utterance of visual discourse of variable complexity. I will return to this in Chapter 3: *On Documentary Photography*, and Chapter 5: *Conclusion* below.

In Structural theory the systems are established synchronically, a closed system and a kind of a-historical balance sheet, where the webs of signification can be analytically laid out in a series of binary oppositions, and like a map their lines of inter-connection traced. The model is conceptually three-dimensional and lines have horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal, syntagmatic plane, links words together grammatically into sentences. The

⁷¹ Chomsky, N 1957: *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague. Mouton.

vertical paradigmatic plane intersects these where a given word can be substituted for another, eg: 'linear' for 'horizontal', as in a thesaurus. Webs of signs, signifiers and signified can in language overlay further webs *ad infinitum* and their syntagmatic and paradigmatic inter-connections and variations plotted in three dimensions. Saussure further distinguishes between the structure of grammatical language which is bound by rules, that he termed *langue*, and speech, *parole*, which is more spontaneous, on a similar model.

Meaning, if there be such, is held to lie within the interstices of relationships, not in the signs. The theory is attractive and indeed brand advertising is largely constructed upon its principles to build a brand identity and a halo of associations (connotations) consumers will, it is hoped, desire. The rhetoric of political parties extolling the virtues of their policies to an electorate do likewise, to the point of sophistry.

In Ricoeur's thought on hermeneutics an "interesting polarity was formed", he tells us, between semantics and semiotics. From this basic polarity other polarities are disclosed that constitute a conflict of interpretations that affect the entire realm of language and linguistic significations (1995: *ibid* p22-23).

Ricoeur examined and analysed the conflicting claims in a series of essays, that are gathered together and published as a book *The Conflict of Interpretations*.(1974).⁷²

Lying beyond these antagonisms, however, Ricoeur perceived an important mediation. Semiotics attempts to be objective and systematic. Ricoeur now sees this as valuable to his purpose. The semiotic viewpoint became for him "...the necessary passage for a self-understanding that was increasingly indirect...". It is the beginning of the long and imaginative detour through the institutions of society and culture that, it is to be hoped for, will ultimately lead to an emancipating self-understanding and self-fulfilment of the subject, and enrichment of the lives of others, through the works and activities produced by the subject as a dynamic and creative agency in affairs.

In the humanities the affect of Structuralism has been profound in challenging traditional orthodoxies, although much less so now as the fury of the initial confrontations has petered out, and the failings in the theory became ever more apparent. Geertz (1926-2006) for example, absorbed semiotics into American cultural anthropology of the time, to provide descriptions of the ethnography of indigenous cultures with various degrees of content, detail and complexity. The most complex he called "thick descriptions" and conversely the least complex "thin descriptions" (Geertz 1973: *The Interpretation of Cultures*).⁷³ In France, Levi-Strauss (1908-2009) argued that the human mind was the same everywhere and adopted linguistic structuralism as the model for a distinctively French structural anthropology, with studies of mythology and of kinship and marriage

⁷² Ricoeur, P 1974: *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics*. ed. Don Ihde. Evanston. Northwestern University Press.

⁷³ Geertz, C 1973: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York. Basic Books.

(Levi-Strauss 1969: *The Elementary Structures of Kinship and Marriage*).⁷⁴ Leach (1910-1989) introduced Levi-Strauss and structuralism into English anthropology as a counter to the structural-functional model for analysing kinship and juridico- political systems that then prevailed. By no means convinced he became highly critical for reasons similar to those arrived at independently by Ricoeur (Leach 1974: *Claude Levi-Strauss*).⁷⁵

In England, Burgin (b.1941), a conceptual artist theorising photography, was an early advocate of applying semiotic analysis to photographs, in the style of Barthes and his semiology of literature and the myths of French cultural life expressed in areas such as fashion, cheese and the Citroen DS motorcar. He was also an advocate of structural Freudian psycho-analysis in the style of Lacan. Both doctrines he attempted to transpose into a universal theory of Photography in a radical transformation of photography theory, whose influence although fast waning continues to be felt (Burgin 1982: *Thinking Photography*).⁷⁶

Ricoeur now recognised that a hermeneutics of the symbol defined as the decipherment of double meanings was “too narrow” in scope and insufficient in power to provide answers to the challenge posed by structuralist theorising. Symbolism alone cannot display its resources of multiple meanings (plurivocity) outside of an appropriate context, for example a poem or a text. Symbolism also gives rise to conflicting interpretations, whether of reducing it to its literal basis or amplifying it to the expression of multiple meanings. For Ricoeur the greatest challenge structuralism and semiotic theorising posed is that it takes no account of the subject, and without anchorage in subjectivity there can, for him, be no dimension of meaning. Structuralism in its diverse forms of thought and application aimed at removing any association with subjective intentions, and the removal of the speaking subject from any form of systematic organisation of “linguistic ensembles”.

This can be seen very clearly in Levi-Strauss’ studies of marriage and kinship relations that wholly ignore the people involved. They are merely ciphers in a system. Ricoeur refers to the thought and work of Levi-Strauss as that of “ a transcendentalism without a subject...” (IA.p18). In photography theory, the title of Burgin’s book is instructive. This is speculation about photography whose ontology requires little or no empiric content. Indeed the art historian Tagg writing on photography and the power of institutions to shape meaning, was to take this line further and declare that photographs held no intrinsic meaning in their representations and subject matter. Any meaning they had was entirely

⁷⁴ Levi-Strauss, C 1969: *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. ed: R. Needham. London. Eyre & Spottiswoode.

⁷⁵ Leach, E 1974. *Claude Levi-Strauss*. Revised edition. New York. Viking Press. Leach writes that “...the outstanding characteristic of Claude Levi-Strauss...is that he is difficult to understand. His sociological theories combine baffling complexity with overwhelming erudition. Some readers... suspect...a confidence trick...” p3.

⁷⁶ Burgin. V 1982: *Thinking Photography*. London. Palgrave MacMillan.

due to the institutional setting in which they were viewed. That is images, as signs, were merely seen as ciphers without author or intention, free of the irksome burden to represent something, floating without meaning in webs of signification to be decoded by an analyst using terms of reference decided by external forces, such as the particular prejudices of an art historian or the particular policies of a gallery curator (Tagg 1981: *The Burden of Representation*).⁷⁷

Furthermore the subject individual, for Ricoeur, is anchored within the diachrony of history, whilst the frame of reference for linguistic semiotics is synchronic, an abstraction of linguistic relations standing outside of history between signs, themselves without meaning. It was thus incapable of contributing to the historicity of the self-conscious and self-realising subject. History, Ricoeur objected, is the "...obligatory mediation for any self-understanding..." (2013: *ibid*).

Ricoeur describes Freudian psychoanalysis and structuralism coming to him as a "double shock" that set him looking for a broader and critical definition of hermeneutics. Ricoeur turned to the emancipating horizons offered by the model of the theory of the text, the theory of action, and the theory of history in which to articulate this. The notions of text, action and history provided the structures and intellectual horizons in which he found it possible to map the diachronic and dialectical procedures and methods of a hermeneutics of broad and general understanding. The theory of the text is central to this new hermeneutic, the fulcrum on which action and history pivot (2013 *ibid*). I examine Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the text in Part 2 of this chapter, p42.

1.8 Coda "A sort of neo-Kantian/neo-Hegelian"?

To return for a moment to Ricoeur's self-characterisation as a "sort of neo-Kantian/neo-Hegelian", what might he mean? I think that he absorbed into the structure of his thought certain features from each without necessarily accepting the whole of their philosophical thesis. From Kant, we can see that Ricoeur takes the notion of rational structure and ordering knowledge, in the sense of following methods and procedures of enquiry and analysis in which to systematically organise thought and understanding. To this he applies the notion of the transcendental ego, of pure understanding lying immanent in all human thought and a transcendental schema that the life of action is the life in which the human mind achieves consciousness of its own reality. From Kant, Ricoeur absorbs the notion that mind *makes nature intelligible*, rather than the doctrine of mind that *creates* Nature through our human senses and the move of thought thinking itself.

Ricoeur absorbs Kant's idea that Time and Space are fundamental things in Nature, the necessary double framework over which all natural facts, phenomena, are spread out

⁷⁷ Tagg, J 1981: *The Burden of Representation*. London, MacMillan.

(Collingwood 1945: *The Idea of Nature*).⁷⁸ It seems clear that we accept the idea that Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutic is a form of Kantian schematism of the transcendental subject.⁷⁹ After all, Ricoeur calls his work in philosophy a 'philosophical anthropology' of the incarnate and capable person, a subject that he early sums up in the formula: "*Man is one as living, two as human*". (*homo simplex in vitalitate, duplex in humanitate*) (Ricoeur 1995 IA *ibid*; 2013: HWL2 *ibid*).⁸⁰ Ricoeur offers a model of a transcendent subject who is master of him or her self and can set at a distance their powers and desires. In the First Critique, Kant differentiates general from scientific knowledge and argues that life of action is where the human mind achieves its own reality (Collingwood *ibid*). At the same time it is a model for a social and ethical subject, living, feeling and inter-acting through relations of an Hegelian type dialectics with others in their shared worlds of direct experience and the social imaginary.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic is also a model for emancipation of the subject, a means of expressing a humanism, in which he or she is able to enjoy a freedom of will and the creative capacity to reflect, think, imagine and act for themselves, whilst yet remaining the servant of the necessities of the unconscious, of character, of circumstances and other people, and of the inescapable facts of birth and death.

From Hegel we can see that Ricoeur absorbs his differing idea of Nature, as a complex system in which parts are but aspects of the whole (which for Hegel is the Absolute Idea, a doctrine of idealism that Ricoeur refused for his philosophy). For Hegel, Nature, or our experience of it, is permeated through and through by process in perpetual motion, unfolding and disclosing.⁸¹ As Hegel acknowledged, it is an old idea that derives from Heraclitus and his doctrine of nature as perpetual flux in the empire of time; in Plato as a belief in universal change, expressed as "nothing ever is, everything is becoming" (that he, Plato, sought to refute with the doctrine of ideal forms); and in Aristotle as "nothing steadfastly is". "There is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted into my logic...the origin of philosophy is to be dated from Heraclitus..." wrote Hegel.⁸²

⁷⁸ Collingwood, R.G 1945: *The Idea of Nature*. Oxford. The Clarendon Press. reprinted 1949.

⁷⁹ Ricoeur said that in his studies of the will, he saw imagination in the sense of a Kantian schematism, mediating three polarities in the will.

⁸⁰ Ricoeur attributes the formula to Maine de Biran (1766-1824), a French philosopher and metaphysician who was interested in understanding psychological aspects of experience. De Biran proposed the idea of Self in consciousness as being an active, striving power, whose stages of development through life he describes as following a three-fold structure of the affective, the perceptive, and the reflective. Ricoeur adopted a similar three-fold structure in elaborating an ontology of disproportionality in his early studies of the Will, published as *Fallible Man* (1965), and similar dialectic triadic structures pop up throughout the discourse of his philosophy and critically underpin his ideas of an amplifying hermeneutics of the text having a three-fold structure of author-text-reader.

⁸¹ Hegel 1802: *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Part 2: *The Philosophy of Nature*. See: Houlgate, S 1999: *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*. New York. SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies.

⁸² Russell, Bertrand 1946/2009: *History of Western Philosophy*. Oxford. Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. Routledge. pp46-47; and pp584-595.

From Hegel, Ricoeur also adopted the procedure of the three cornered, triadic movement of the 'dialectic', thesis-antithesis-synthesis, vital to forming a cornerstone of his own philosophical and hermeneutic method of mediating philosophical oppositions, 'antagonisms' as he called them, and in their mediated synthesis surpassing their singularity. A basic structure which recurs over and again in his philosophy and hermeneutics. From both Kant and Hegel we can see also that Ricoeur adopted a model of process as activity and action, a dynamic and logical necessity of agency and purpose as fundamental to his developed conception of hermeneutics. This notion of process revolves upon concepts whose inherent power is that one concept generates another, moving through a step-by-step procedure of examination of that initial concept held away at a distance, that gives rise to a new concept and new form of itself. Thus a concept grows like an organism, passing from potentiality to actuality by 'sprouting' new, heterogenous determinations of itself, new forms from which yet further new forms can evolve in an ordered and methodical way.⁸³

It is to Husserl, however, that Ricoeur owes the methodology of the phenomenological eidetic analysis and polarity of the *noema* (that which is experienced) and the *noesis* (how that is experienced) that unified object and subject together in a dialectic relation. But what then of the Kantian doctrine that there can be no knowledge of anything transcendent, that which he called *noumenon* it might be asked? Ricoeur gave a great deal of attention to the logic and epistemological status of hermeneutics (2013: *Hermeneutical Logic? ibid*).

1.9 Summary

Ricoeur in the immediate post-war years of the 1940s and early 1950s devoted his philosophy to examining the phenomenology of the human subject and human will. This he found expressed in ancient and modern symbols of evil and guilt. Phenomenology alone could not account for the psychological mechanisms of interpretation at play. The philosophy of hermeneutics, which is the philosophy of interpretation, offered a possible solution. It became apparent to Ricoeur that symbols held a double meaning, the visible surface meaning and the suspicion of a hidden complex of meanings within that. Only through the literal meaning could thought access the hidden meanings be interpreted and their meanings revealed. Ricoeur turned to the then fashionable psychology of Freud for greater insight. There he discovered a semantics of desire and the possibility of two routes for hermeneutics to follow. The Freudian, which is reductive, and the Hegelian which is emancipating and fulfilling. Ricoeur chose the latter.

Attempting to unify his allegiance to phenomenology with hermeneutics, Ricoeur moved away from symbolism as such, to symbolism as a structure of language. Language had become a major topic of interest for twentieth-century philosophy, particularly within the

⁸³ Collingwood 1945 (*ibid*); Russell 1963 (*ibid*).

Anglo-American analytic tradition. Language was thought the essential instrument through which we constitute, understand and articulate our understandings of the world in which we live, not an epi-phenomenon. Philosophical interest was broadly with how language is used and deciphering the logic lying behind that. Words are considered not as mere labels imposed on a given order of things, but are the collective products of social interactions (Harris 1988: *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*).⁸⁴

Abstract understanding of how the structures of language and speech worked internally was greatly influenced by the studies of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Saussure's studies of linguistic structure that he developed in studies of speech and phonetics, gave rise to his theories of semiology, the study of signs and sign processes.. Language was reduced to a system of words as signs and their inter-relations. Formally, semiology has three analytical strands: semantics and the relation between signs and their meaning, *denotata*; syntactics and the relations among signs within formal structures; pragmatics and the relations between signs and sign users.

In America, Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914), a philosopher and logician, in a parallel development within logic, proposed all the universe is composed of signs. Any thing is a sign, not as itself, but as standing in some relation or other. Logic, suggested Pierce, is a formal branch of semiotics. Signs are rooted "in the social principle", in the broadest sense of their referential (pointing to something) and inferential (about meaning) relations. Others realised this way of conceptualising things had wider implications for the study of literature and the structures of texts, and the study of the structures of cultural and social institutions and aspects of life. Saussure's theories about the structures of language and speech, along with those of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), which together became more widely known than those of Pierce, entered into mainstream European thought from the 1940s onwards at an increasing pace of acceptance within the humanities and social sciences as the doctrines of Structuralism and Semiotics. Structuralism is a theory of abstract relations between sounds in speech, or signs in writing in which there are only differences. The greatest emphasis was given to the syntactic structures of signs and linguistic systems. The logic of their interactions were understood as based only on negative difference, 'a' - not'a'. It is a closed system without meaning and without history. The pragmatic subjective actor is excluded.

This way of thinking presented Ricoeur with a major challenge. He responded by developing a new type of philosophical hermeneutics that has ontological and epistemological parameters. The subjective self as actor and agency in making sense of experience is placed centre stage. He adopted the model of the theory of the written text, the theory of action and the theory of history in which to articulate this. The concentration is on more than an analysis of the structures of the text, but also on the narrative play of language doing something, saying something about something to someone that is meaningful, intelligible, imaginative, and enriches life.

⁸⁴ Harris, R 1988: *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*. London. Routledge.

Part 2

Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the Text, Action and History.

Consider for a moment, if you would, these two passages of text.

“I suppose the greatest exit which we are called upon to make, or which is wished upon us, is our birth; that...bewildering affair which brings us often breathless into the long corridor of life leading directly, sometimes indirectly, but always inevitably, to our final supreme exit, death. The corridor is lined all its length with doors; some open, some just ajar, some closed. Closed; but seldom, if ever, locked. It is entirely up to us which ones we choose to try, and we are only given a certain amount of time in which to arrive at the inevitable door at the end. Nothing very original about that.” (Bogarde 1988: *Snakes and Ladders* p156).⁸⁵

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry that I could not travel both and be one traveller, long I stood and looked down as far as I could to where it bent in the undergrowth. Then took the other, as just as fair, and having perhaps the better claim, because it was grassed and wanted wear; though as for that passing there had worn them really about the same, and both that morning equally lay in leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back. I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence: two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.” (Frost 1988: *Robert Frost* p34).⁸⁶

Both writers are using language as written text with the intention to describe their intuitions about the enigma of life and the journey in the world that we must all make in all its moods, in language that is lapidary, deeply felt and full of meaning. Both are works of imagination about the ineffable, the difficult decisions we make for good or ill, gladness in those that turn out well and regret at others passed over. Bogarde, an actor and writer, died in 1999; Frost, a poet, died in 1963. We can never meet them, and yet their words remain for us to share as they intended, interpret and re-interpret as we wish. Their words picture a world couched in realism and easily recognisable yet is not real but metaphorical and symbolic, that enters into our imagination, in ways I at least find interpretable, moving and meaningful, that enriches my life. Such is the power of the written word. Wonderful. No wonder that Ricoeur constructed his hermeneutics of an emancipating subjectivity, and an amplifying language open to its own possibilities of expressing manifold meanings, on the model of the text and of intentional actions in the mediations of history and time. Both texts are examples of intentional interventions in the

⁸⁵ Bogarde, D 1988: *Snakes and Ladders*, vol 2. London. Penguin Books.

⁸⁶ Frost, Robert 1988: *The Illustrated Poets: Robert Frost*. London. Aurum Press.

world, and of the act of discourse by which Ricoeur came to define hermeneutics:

“Someone saying something about something to someone.”

2.1: The hermeneutics of the Text.

Ricoeur defines hermeneutics “...as the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts...”. The key idea will be “...the realisation of discourse as a text..” (1991: *The Task of Hermeneutics*. FTA p53-74).

Ricoeur adopts to his revised and critical hermeneutics, the central paradigm the model of the Theory of the Text, the Theory of Action, and the Theory of History. The Theory of the Text is the fulcrum upon which these three functions pivot and interweave, discourse is the power that energises them (HWL2).⁸⁷

The attraction of the Text is that writing opens language to new and original resources for discourse. It allows semantic innovations and multiple meanings to enter and overcomes the limitations of face-to-face speech. Writing allows language a semantic autonomy that has a three-fold structure:

The Speaker’s intentions
The cultural, social & economic circumstances of its production
The Reception of its’ original audience, and other audiences later.

The written text opens language to the condition for discourse of language and its’ own-most-possibilities for becoming-text (OI *ibid*. p17). The task of hermeneutics is now two-fold, states Ricoeur. On one side, it is to examine the internal dynamic governing the structure of the text. On the other side, it is to examine the power of the work to project itself outside of itself and create an accessible, intelligible, world of its own. A world of the text that is “...truly...the ‘thing’ referred to by the text...” (*ibid*).

2.2: Discourse.

Writing in 1991, Ricoeur still felt it necessary to say that hermeneutics, the general theory of interpretation, had not yet finished “having it out” with Husserlian phenomenology. Hermeneutics comes out of the phenomenology, he says, “... it is the place where hermeneutic originates, but phenomenology is also the place that hermeneutics has surpassed and left behind...” (1991: *Preface*. FTA *ibid*). Structuralism and the linguistic turn brought Ricoeur to the notion of Discourse that arises from the act of predicative synthesis of an opposition between semantics and semiotics, defined as someone says something to someone about something, in accordance with rules of language: phonetic, lexical, syntactic, stylistic (IA *ibid* p22). Three things flow in consequence:

1. The notion of Discourse implied the recognition of another speaker, standing over and against the act of discourse and interlocution between one speaker and another. This raised into consideration the problematic of inter-subjectivity and communication.

⁸⁷ Ricoeur, P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press. Hereafter referred to as HWL2.

2. The distinction between Sense and Reference within discourse opened discourse to something more than itself. It opened discourse to the world. "Saying" is saying something about the world. This, for Ricoeur, agreed with what he held to be the intentionality of saying which is, the act of affirmation. Affirming, Ricoeur insists, is the act of ratifying what is.

3. The dimension of speaker to speaker interlocution and the referential of saying something about something through language came to the foreground of attention. Discourse brought into the hermeneutic field three intersecting lines as problems to be resolved:

- a) The mediation brought by the objective doctrines of semiotics and signs.
- b) The recognition of others implied in the act of interlocution.
- c) The relation to the world, and to being, implied by the referential direction of discourse.

Discourse thus involves three moments of interpretation, at least, namely locution, illocution, and perlocution in the explanation and understanding of the narrative of texts, the intentional intervention in the world they represent, and the autonomous world the narrative creates. Discourse articulates a locutor: a subject of discourse, illocution: an act of discourse, a content of discourse in a meta-linguistic code, perlocution and extra-linguistic references. Discourse reaches its ultimate destination in the form of an interlocutor, a reader. All of this Ricoeur sums up in the formula: Discourse is the hermeneutic act by which and by following common rules, *"Someone says something about something to someone"* (HWL2 p12).

2.3: Explanation and Understanding.

As Ricoeur encountered philosophical hermeneutics, the two forces of explanation and understanding were aligned as polar opposites in a schema of method that dated back to Wilhelm Dilthey in the nineteenth-century. Ricoeur thought the opposition now to be "disastrous" to his purpose and set himself to resolve it by finding a way in which to unify the two into a single thesis of explanation *and* understanding. He did so through reconsidering the notion of Interpretation. What is it to "interpret" something by explanation and understanding?

The question of Interpretation and discourse re-instates the polarity between explanation and understanding into Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics as a problem to be mediated. Writing in the nineteenth century, Dilthey sought to legitimate the human social sciences, as 'scientific' in their procedures by giving them a distinctive hermeneutical methodology. He called this "understanding" *verstehen*. Understanding is characterised by an overall and intuitive insight into what is in question taken as a mode of nature. The premiss is that all human beings are alike beneath their cultural differences and therefore accessible to a committed analyst and fellow human being. To the natural sciences, taken as being a mode of mind, Dilthey ascribed a hermeneutic methodology of "explanation". Explanation is characterised by the subordination of a particular case to analysis

conducted by inductive rules, laws, and structures of procedure, notably experimentation to prove or disprove an hypothesis. The rules of the game are designed to ensure an objective, dispassionate analysis of what is in question and remove the possibility of subjective bias. To achieve this the procedures deliberately set the object of analysis at a distance apart from the observer. Popper has shown the questions asked when establishing an experiment are subjective, and the effort to inductively prove an hypothesis to be a mistake. Instead he argued that scientific method should be directed in favour of empirical falsification (Popper 1934: *Logic der Forschung*. 1959: *The Logic of Scientific Discoveries*).⁸⁸

Ricoeur sees in the dichotomy ontological and epistemological difficulties for a hermeneutics of the text. What is at issue is whether science constitutes an homogenous whole, or whether there is a necessary epistemological break between the natural and the human sciences. Ricoeur finds the dichotomy presents comparable aporias in the fields of the text, of action and of history and their parallelism with the narrative genre of discourse passing from an explanation of the narrative object to an understanding of the narrative operation. At a deeper level he argues that the fate of philosophy is at risk if it cannot subordinate the idea of method to a more fundamental conception of our "...truth-relation to things and to beings..." (1991: *Explanation and Understanding*. (EU) in FTA *ibid* p125-147). Ricoeur wishes to mediate the opposition, which are presented as irreducible alternatives, with a subtle dialectic in which explanation and understanding could be considered as relative moments in the complex process of interpretation.

If the opposition is upheld, explanation would reduce a text to a machine with strictly internal workings. Thus it is not open to questions about authorial intention, the reception of the text by an audience, even less the density of sense and meanings of the text distinct from its form. 'Understanding' in hermeneutic terms is held to establish a link between the subjectivities of the author and the reader. Explanation alone would eliminate this. However for the method of understanding, the move to objectivity that explanation aims for would be unacceptable. In the realm of Understanding Dilthey points towards a psychological empathy between people on the grounds we are all *homo sapiens*. Ricoeur argues that Dilthey made a mistake in confusing 'understanding' and 'understanding others', as though, he says, "...it were always first a matter of apprehending a foreign psychological life behind a text...(EU *ibid* p131). In the narrative genre of discourse what is to be understood first, is what is being talked about. That is, *the thing of the text*, the kind of world that it unfolds. Not the psychology of the person speaking behind the text, the author.

⁸⁸ Popper, K 1959: *The Logic of Scientific Discoveries*. Reprinted 2002. London. Routledge.

2.4 Interpretation.

Ricoeur resolves the problem by proposing that Interpretation consists precisely in the subtleties of the dialectic found, "...in the alternating of phases of understanding and those of explanation along a unique hermeneutical arc..."(HWL2 p9). How this dialectic of explanation and understanding operates in practice, is determined in terms of the specific epistemological field under consideration. The style of alternation between explanation and understanding will differ in the respective fields of text, action and history (*ibid*).

Ricoeur refers to Aristotle and the theory of tragedy. He says that in this is a key that is valid for all narratives (EU. *ibid*. p131). The poet, says Ricoeur, offers a *mimesis* in composing a fable. The fable has a plot, *muthos*, in a creative imitation of human action. In the same way a logic of possible narratives finds completion only in the mimetic function by which the narrative remakes the human world of action. Therefore denial of the subjective character of understanding by which explanation reaches its conclusion is no longer in question. There is always a *someone* who receives and appropriates the meaning of the text for themselves. There is, however, no short route between an objective analysis of narrative structures and the appropriation of meaning from the text by readers. Lying between the two is the entire illocutionary world of the text open onto the world of experience which it redescribes and remakes. If then, the reader as subject feels called upon to understand themselves better, or at all, in light of the text; if their imagination is fired sufficiently to do so then possible paths to real action are opened to them (*ibid*).

2.5: Language and Text.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic of the text extends interpretation to all phenomena and inscriptions having a readable, textual nature. Thus the narratives of documentary photography are eligible as a form of readable text. Over a period of thirty, or so, years Ricoeur extended his thought on hermeneutics in two overlapping and inter-weaving directions. One followed through the theory of the text and the language phenomenon of semantic innovation (1978: *The Rule of Metaphor*;⁸⁹ 1984,85 & 88: *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols)⁹⁰; and another followed the concern for the Subject as self, ethics and for practical reasoning in the social, juridical and political worlds of the social imaginary (1986: *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*).⁹¹ This brought Ricoeur further into dialogue with the humanities and the social sciences at what he felt was the border of proper philosophical concern, but opened stimulating new lines of thought that reverberate today. Ricoeur argues that hermeneutics transcends disciplinary limitations. It lies between their traditional boundaries and, operating as a general theory, mediates between them (1981: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*).⁹² 2000: *The Just*.⁹³).

⁸⁹ Ricoeur, P 1978: RM.

⁹⁰ Ricoeur, P 1984, 1985, 1988: T&N 1/2/3.

⁹¹ Ricoeur, P 1986: *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. New York. Columbia University Press. (Hereafter referred to as LIU).

⁹² Ricoeur P 1981: HHS.

2.6: The notion of the Text.

The notion of the text is a means-end rationality. Ricoeur is always concerned to work from a foundation of language as the defining human condition. Text first implies discourse. Second, text presupposes a distinction between speech and written language. Speech involves face-to-face utterances and dialogue. Its time horizon is the present of both parties. What passes may rest in memory of one or both but otherwise disappears. Written language is language recorded, inscribed and given permanence. The link of utterances and dialogue between locutor and inter-locutor is broken. The written text can be read by anyone literate in the language in which it is inscribed (1991: *What is a Text?* (WIT) in FTA *ibid* p105-124). The written text goes beyond the inscription of speech, recording something that has already appeared orally, to language that is now open to utterances of its own-most-possibilities of expression and to new semantic innovations in a semantic micro-universe.

In writing a new “instrument of thinking and discourse is born..”(HWL2 *ibid*). Writing calls for reading, a someone with the literacy skills sufficient to decode the symbolic marks on a page or screen, and make sense of them. Making sense introduces the notion of interpretation. The relationship between writing and reading is not an instance of dialogue of reader to author, for the relationship of reader to text is of a different nature (WIT p107). Dialogue implies conversation and exchange of questions and answers. There is no such exchange between a reader and a text. The text is inert, it does not respond to the reader. Thus the writer is absent from the act of reading, as the reader is absent from the act of writing (except perhaps within imagination, or if there is prior knowledge in either direction). Assuming neither condition holds then in this way the text produces, says Ricoeur, a double-eclipse of the reader and the writer (*ibid*).

Ricoeur continues with an allusion to the semiotic notion encountered in Barthes, when he writes, “...sometimes I like to say that to read a book is to consider its author as already dead and the book as posthumous...”. For only then is the relation to the text, the book, complete and intact. The author can no longer respond, “...it only remains to read his work...” (*ibid*). As indeed the two examples of text that I began this chapter with, and the examination that I am subjecting Ricoeur’s writing to, testify. Whilst true it is an unsettling thought. Yet precisely the same relation holds with the narratives of documentary photography. In these there is a double eclipse of the people photographed, and myself as the photographing author of the pictures. They are history and I am history, the photo-narratives are thus a form of historiography, of writing history. For myself, I am acutely conscious of this when photographing. Two fields are brought into relationship, the epistemological and the semantic, causation and motivation and hence to explanation and understanding. To overcome it my practice is to inform myself about the people and their circumstances before beginning any photography. I will give a presentation of past

⁹³ Ricoeur, P 2000: *The Just*. trans. David Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

work so they are informed about me. Then I will meet and talk with people, over and again. For the Case Study 'Waterside South' I spent days doing this to win people's trust and co-operation, and days tramping the streets, absorbing the place, making notes, comparing what I saw and heard with what I had previously read or been told. Only then did I feel that I could, tentatively, begin photographing. Always ruefully aware that I might need to change my mind and do something differently. In other words I entered into a world of discourse.

For Ricoeur, the relationship between the original author, the text, and the readers is now one of discourse in a discourse universe. Both the semantic and discourse universes are actualised in written texts, whose time horizon is history. Furthermore, to write is a deliberate action and one imbued with intention and purpose. The phenomenon of inscription gives to the written text a special authority. However, the act of inscription establishes a distance between what is spoken in dialogue and speech, and what is written. This leads to a certain suspicion and a question. How can such meaningful affects be produced? Ricoeur suggests that there is here a certain conflict between authority and genesis.

A further consequence to be noted is that being written down as inscribed language, means those texts have the possibility of becoming archives ever more deeply bound in history, which can be examined at a later date, and whose meanings could be disclosed through the procedures and methods of hermeneutic analysis.

What is more, the discourse of the written text has a history separate from its author. The meaning of the text is independent of the possible intentions of the author. The text has a semantic autonomy whose history unfolds distinct from its author. There is thus ambiguity between what an author may have intended to signify (i.e: 'mean') and what a text signifies to a reader, who brings their personal knowledge, values and prejudices. The ambiguity is unavoidable because it is a product of the creation of the text. All of this holds good for documentary photographing.

There is a further consequence yet of writing language into a text. It abolishes the ostensive reference of speech, Ricoeur claims. (I am uncertain on this point). Ricoeur claims that in writing there is a shift in relation to every kind of reality capable of being pointed to. The question he poses is thus, whether literature can be said to *refer* to something that can be called 'a world of the text'. This is logical given the text eclipses the 'real' world experienced empirically. It substitutes an interpreted version of that world, that is the imaginative world of the text. So we speak easily of "the world of Shakespeare, of Dickens, of Frost" that they create through their writings and we respond to.

Finally the notion of the written text implies *texture, composition, voice*. Elements that make a text into a work. The act of inscription invites the writer to consider with care the structure, composition, mood, flow and voice of the text. This is a different state of affairs to speech and normal conversation where there is rarely this luxury. An exception, perhaps, comes with the formal circumstance of speech as a monologue, a Speech delivered by one person to an audience. There formal rhetoric soon enters the equation to good, sometimes great effect, as Churchill knew very well.

Different writers from different backgrounds have variously sought to formulate this event. Searle, for example, uses the phrase “illocutionary utterance” (Searle 1969 *ibid*)⁹⁴ and Kemp refers to “structural intuitions” (Kemp 2000 *ibid*).⁹⁵ Ricoeur quotes with approval the Finnish philosopher, Georg Henrik von Wright and his reformulation of the conditions of explanation and the conditions of understanding into a combination that he terms, “intentional intervention” in the world (EU *ibid* p135; von Wright 1971: *Explanation and Understanding*).⁹⁶ Ricoeur notes his indebtedness to von Wright, writing about systems theory, with whom only the notion of a closed, partial system is conceivable, and not universal systems. Thus Ricoeur conceives the text and the world it creates as a form of closed system that has a three fold structure of an initial state, various stages, and a terminal state. The point being that a text thought about in this way is “an elegant model” for narrative which, in its fabrication must include and pass through a series of phases, each opening onto a greater or lesser number of alternatives, in a progressive order. Much like the process of writing this thesis, and certainly what occurs, in my experience, in the processes of fieldwork documentary photographing, as I have indicated above.

2.7 Summary.

For Ricoeur, the attraction of von Wright’s thesis is that human action, agency, can now be situated. Explanation unified with understanding are a dialectic of interpretation. Explanation now belongs in the domain of system theory. Understanding belongs in the domain of motivation, intentional and motivated human action. The two elements, which he defines as a) the course of things, and b) human action, are woven together in the warp and weft of a notion of *intervention* in the course of things. This notion provokes a conception of *cause* different from that proposed by Hume. Cause is now synonymous with the initiative of an agent. It is not set in opposition to motive but includes it. In a lambent phrasing, Ricoeur formulates this as “...intervention in the course of things implies that we are following the articulation of natural systems...” (EU *ibid* p137).

⁹⁴ Searle, J. R 1969: *Speech Acts. An essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁵ Kemp, M 2000: *Visualizations: The Nature Book of Art and Science*. Berkeley. The University of California Press.

⁹⁶ Von Wright, Georg Henrik 1971: *Explanation and Understanding*. Reprinted 2011. London. Routledge History and Philosophy of Science.

Writing a text is a matter of acting to intervene in the world. There is no intervention without an initial state and without the exercise of a power. ‘Acting’ is always doing something, so that something else happens in the world. There is no action without there being the relation between knowing how to do something, and that which the doing brings about. Causality goes hand in hand with recognising and identifying a power that belongs to the repertoire of capacities for action that we all possess as human agents. There is thus, in Ricoeur’s eyes a convergence between the theory of the text and the theory of action. He writes, “...the same aporias and the same necessity for a dialectical solution have arisen in both fields...” (*ibid*).

Profound reasons justify the synthesis of the theory of the text and the theory of action. The notion of the text is a good paradigm for human action. The notion of action is a good referent for diverse categories of texts. Again I find this holds good for my conception of documentary photographing praxis. We shall return to this below in the section ‘Text to Action’.

2.8 The World of the Text.

What is a Text, asks Ricoeur? (1991: *What is a Text?* In FTA *ibid* p105-124). The written text is, in Ricoeur’s view, an ‘ordered creation’ that follows prescribed rules, methods and a narrative programme to which he gives the brief formula: “...a text is any discourse fixed by writing...” (*ibid* p106). Thus writing is constitutive of the text itself. What comes to writing is discourse as *intention-to-say* and writing is a direct inscription of this intention. Writing preserves that discourse and makes it available for individual and collective memory as an historical archive.

As with Greimas, narratology and the notion of narrativity are the basis of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the text and action (Greimas 1966: *Structural Semantics*...).⁹⁷ Ricoeur explores these by drawing upon Aristotle and the *Poetics*,⁹⁸ with detailed examinations of the properties of metaphor (1978: *The Rule of Metaphor*. RM),⁹⁹ that was followed with a similarly rigorous examinations of the literary devices of emplotment and narrative in the cathartic structure of texts, and our conceptions of Time as the necessary historical mediation of narrative form (1984, 1985, 1988: *Time and Narrative*. 3 volumes. T&N).¹⁰⁰

Ricoeur identifies and is intrigued by two phenomena of language that he finds enigmatic. These are the phenomenon of Sense and Reference. On the one hand, inscription closes language in upon itself, concerned only with its own poetics and structure. The sense or meaning of the text is internalised.. It is thus ‘exiled’ from the world. On the other hand,

⁹⁷ Greimas, A.J 1966: *Structural Semantics: an attempt at method*. Trans. McDowell, Schleifer & Velie. Lincoln. Nebraska University Press.

⁹⁸ Aristotle: *Poetics*. Trans. S. Halliwell. With *On the Sublime* (“Longinus”) and *On Style* (“Demetrius”). Loeb Classical Library 23. Harvard University Press. Revised edition 1995.

⁹⁹ Ricoeur, P 1978: *The Rule of Metaphor: multi-disciplinary studies of the creation meaning in language*. trans. Czerny, R; Blamey, K; Costello, J. Toronto. University of Toronto Press. (Hereafter referred to as RM).

¹⁰⁰ Ricoeur, P 1984, 1985, 1988: *Time and Narrative*. 3 volumes. Trans. By K. McCoughlan and D. Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

inscription *refers*, it amplifies and augments our understanding through its power to look outwards, discover and transform human reality. In addressing another speaker or reader, the author as the initial subject of discourse engages in *saying something about something*. That about which is spoken or written is the *referent of the discourse*.

2.8.1 Distanciation.

Distanciation is a concept taken from phenomenology, where in the method of the epoche consciousness places *sense* at a distance from the lived experience of things to which we daily adhere (IA *ibid* p36). Reference occurs by a curious backwards and forwards movement. On the one hand writing draws things to our attention and brings them close (what I have called making “the active presence of absent things” in the title of this thesis), on the other the act of writing removes things from us, isolates and places them apart. Ricoeur calls this the phenomenon of *distanciation*.

The act of writing places events at a distance from the author. Writing can now only *refer* to something, unlike speech and face-to face dialogue that has a deictic function whose ostensive reference and meaning is dependent on the context in which it occurs. Writing suspends that deictic function. The reference of a written text can be any kind of reality capable of being pointed to, whether empirical ‘fact’, imaginative poetry, imaginative fiction, or even fantasy and science-fiction. The reference of the text is now the World of the Text that is created within its’ narrative. That is it’s moment of discourse. However written text enters into another realm of discourse over time and history, further distancing it from the author and their intentions.

The text is ultimately addressed to an audience, perhaps known but more likely quite unknown. The written text is open to anyone literate in the language in which it is written.¹⁰¹ By definition the audience of readers of a text is unlimited and undetermined except, perhaps, in closed disciplinary worlds, such as academia. Even then most people in those worlds are not known to each other personally.

Finally behind the idea of a written text lies the presupposition of composition, the structuring of the narrative and the texture of the aesthetics held in the choice of vocabulary, the tone of voice, the mood of expression and the rhythm of the flow, and the pace of its unfolding. In a word, the challenge of performance and choice of poetics. These are all similar to the conditions for making documentary photographic narratives considered as inscriptions with a text-like character. For an author it is question of the *praxis* of writing, for the photographer, the *praxis* of photographing. Both can be encapsulated in the Aristotelian formula of *phronesis*. Doing what you are good at with command of technicalities, skill in their deployment, judgement in their application.

¹⁰¹ Thus much world literature is closed to me because I am not a linguist, unless it is available in translation. Translation creates a further double eclipse of the text because there must be a bi-lingual translator and the language being translated into. They are highly variable quantities and a direct word for word transcription is scarcely possible. Each language has its own idioms known to a native speaker but not capable of being transposed language to another language.

Kemp refers to this as structured intuitions, I think it is less abstract than that, both intuitive and more pragmatic and hands-on at one and the same time (Kemp 2000 *ibid*).¹⁰² To write it is necessary to stand back from what is being written about in order to see things clearly, and the act of writing brings close and yet pushes what is being written away from the author. It is a curious phenomena in which the mental intention of the author and the verbal meaning of the text are disassociated but one Ricoeur thought essential to our understanding how a text works. He called it *distanciation* (1991: *The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation*).

A written text creates its own world of the imagination that can be factual, fiction or poetic. Once written the text lies at a distance separate and autonomous from the author. Being written, the text is also a vehicle of communication to others lying distanced from them. They can bring themselves in to contact with the text along with their own prejudices in the expectation that it can provide them with information, meaning and food for their imaginations.

2.8.2 Sense and Reference.

There is however a paradox. That is the phenomena of *semantic innovation*. Ricoeur teases out language open to new alternatives of expression and meaning. The alternatives are not those between an authority and the genesis of a text, as all the above would indicate, but between the consistency and inconsistency of a text as a structured event. Ricoeur refers to this as “the problem of the dialectic of Sense and Reference, on one side, and of writing and reading on the other...” (HWL2 *ibid* p13-14). The similar dualism raises its head in the dichotomy of photography as Document or Art which traditionally are polarised and defined in negative terms by what they are not, within the milieu of photography theory. Thus Documentary is *not* Art and Art is *not* Documentary (Edwards 2006: *The Making of English Photography*).¹⁰³

In writing new forms of expression create new forms of meaning and thus of understanding. The paradox lies in deciding at what point does semantic innovation eclipse any reference to the world? Even to the point of rendering the world of reality as superfluous to the text? The production of meaning is bound to synthetic operations that create new forms of discourse. Metaphor is the prime example, and one that Ricoeur examined exhaustively in *The Rule of Metaphor* (RM *ibid*). The theory of narrative is also a synthesis of heterogeneous elements brought together from disparate sources and unified into a story.

¹⁰² Kemp, M 2000: *Visualizations: The Nature Book of Art and Science*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

¹⁰³ Edwards, S 2006: *The Making of English Photography, Allegories*. Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania State University Press.

Semantic innovation in a poetic discourse operating thanks to metaphor, and semantic innovation in a narrative discourse operating upon the basis of a plot can become a symmetrical or asymmetrical configuration of the text. The choice is open. Either way semantic innovation reveals the power of opening language further to the world. The very act of creating a text expresses a surplus of referentiality. Ricoeur frames his discussion in the language of semiotics at this point. His concern is with the relation between signs and things. In semiotic theory the sign is an abstraction, as Ricoeur phrases it, ‘exiled’ from the world. Yet, he argues, there is no such thing as “a world of signs”. The sign is *about* the world, there is always a *reference*.

2.8.3 Poesis.

However there is a difference between descriptive language, as signs, and literary language. In literature language is used inventively, poetically. Poetic language is language free of prosaic constraints and the most we have available to us in attempting to express “the secret of things”, as Ricoeur phrases matters. In this understanding, poetic language contributes to the *re-description of reality* (IA *ibid* p28-29). There is, however, a sense in which the very inventiveness creates a distance between the text and the reference because the very act of composition gives to the text an autonomous existence, the power to exist independently of author, reader, or institution. Ricoeur quotes Guillaume and the expression writing “turns language back towards the universe” (HWL2 p15). Prescient perhaps, because Ricoeur was writing before the internet had become so deeply ingrained in life. Today we would call this “cloud information” held vaguely on the internet.

The problem for Ricoeur was the question of returning the sign towards the thing at the level in discourse and narrative of the metaphorical statement. In this lies the genesis of the volume *Rule of Metaphor* (1978)¹⁰⁴ and the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* (1984,1985,1988).¹⁰⁵

2.8.4 Metaphor and new meaning.

The difficulty Ricoeur identifies with semantic innovation seeming to eclipse any reference to the world is that the production of new meaning in written language is bound to synthetic operations that create new forms of discourse. With metaphor, for example, it is the comparison between unlikely semantic fields: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day, thou art more lovely and more temperate?” (Sonnet 18). Person and day are an unlikely comparison and yet we know what Shakespeare means. The beauty of one is comparable to and surpasses the beauty of the other. Metaphor is a good example of semantic innovation in the use of language. It seemed to Ricoeur to be a “good touchstone”, endorsed in Antiquity by being catalogued amongst the figures of style in the

¹⁰⁴ Ricoeur, P 1978: *The Rule of Metaphor: multi-disciplinary studies of the creation meaning in language*. trans. Czerny, R; Blamey, K; Costello, J. Toronto. University of Toronto Press.

¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur, P 1984, 1985, 1988: *Time and Narrative*. 3 volumes. Trans. By K. McCoughlan and D. Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

framework of rhetoric, Aristotle placing it within both the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric* (IA *ibid* p27).

Metaphor brings innovation to language on the level of meaning. It does so in two significant ways:

1. As predication.
2. As reference.
- 3.

2.8.5 Predication. To explain this Ricoeur felt he had to make a change from the semiotics of the word, as in Saussure, to semantics at the level of the sentence, as he found in Benveniste. In Aristotelian theory, metaphor is an ornament of rhetoric. Meaning consists in denomination and transferring from one thing to another, “thee” transferred to “summer’s day”. Ricoeur felt this way of thinking about metaphor had been superceded by English-language philosophers who placed the creation of meaning within predication. Metaphor thus appeared in a new light, as the “most brilliant illustration of the power of language to create meaning by the means of unexpected comparisons” (IA *ibid*). A new semantic relevance has been disclosed through the use of metaphor.

2.8.6 Reference.

Ricoeur returns to the notion of Reference, which he sees as a difficult and controversial topic (HWL2 *ibid*). In the *Rule of Metaphor* he proposes a thesis that the descriptive function of discourse eclipses a first degree reference to something. This he states is nothing more than the other side of the coin in which he sees as “an infinitely more remarkable process”, that is the *re-description* of the world comparable to the role of models in scientific knowledge, referred to above. The text builds an indirect reference not of reality but of a model for reality. The question now is whether the referencing corresponds with the intention of the author, or whether it is a function of language? The answer to the perplexity lies in knowing under what conditions someone speaking metaphorically about the world chooses to speak metaphorically rather than literally (*Metaphorical Reference* in RM *ibid*).

Ricoeur now had at his disposal a three-fold structure for a semantics of language, consisting of Word: Sentence: Text. It was not until he examined and analysed Narrative that this three fold articulation was fully realised.

2.8.7 Narrative and Plot

Ricoeur suggests that the theory of the narrative brings a comparable phenomenon to light. Narrative has a plot that is constructed of bits and pieces combining intentions, causes and accidents that finally are pulled together into a temporal configuration from a series of discrete events.

Ricoeur suggests that the configuring act of the plot mirrors the unlikely predications found in metaphor. In the world of the text metaphor and plot are the counterparts of semantic innovation and the foundation stones upon which the world of the text is created.

Both implicate a subject in discourse, and both implicate the question of *reference* which is posed by the theory of discourse adopted by Ricoeur (IA *ibid*).

2.9 Time and Narrative.

Time.

Why should we be concerned, why would Ricoeur be concerned about and interested in the phenomena of Time? The answer lies in *mimesis*₃, re-figuration. Time, states Ricoeur, is the philosophical theme that governs the three volumes of *Time and Narrative*. Narrativity in his eyes, offers a *response* to the aporias of time.

The sources for his interest are heterogenous and wide ranging over philosophy and theology that he lays out in detail within his Intellectual Autobiography (IA *ibid*). I am selecting from that which he says about the relation of time to the narrative text and the narrative function as distinct from that of narrative structure or form. There is, says Ricoeur, a relation of mutual conditioning between narrativity and temporality. Ricoeur was led to the conclusion that there was a “knot of difficulties” and apparently insoluble aporias in the notion we have of time. The biggest of these was an apparent irreducibility of the physical, cosmological understanding to the psychological and phenomenological understanding of time. The aporia focused around the structure of the present. Ricoeur saw this as having two modalities: the pinpoint instant and the living present. The instant reduces to a break between a before and an unlimited past. The living present is filled with a recent past and an imminent future. As a phenomenological experience lived time presented another aporia as the totality of a single time. In relation to this all the lapses of time would be no more than parts, in a Kantian schema.

Time appeared to have an inscrutable nature that neither Kant nor Bergson could give a satisfactory intuition of. *Time and Narrative* vol 3 presents an analysis in which Augustine, Husserl, Heidegger are brought together to an account that articulates the overlapping of the past, as the milieu of memory and of history, the future as the milieu of hope, expectation and fear, and the present as the milieu or moment of attention and initiative. The question of time and the narrative came together in the borrowing from Augustine Book XI of the *Confessions* of the concept *distentio animi* - the swelling of the soul by creating a conscience through meditation upon social practices, within a sense of time governed by the movement of the stars; and the theory of tragic *muthos* borrowed from Aristotle’s poetics. The distention, swelling, of the soul between the past of memory, the future of expectation, and the present of intuition, corresponded to the emplotment and the sudden changes of fortune of the feigned dramas of tragedy is given in *Time and Narrative* vol 1. The emphasis is placed by Ricoeur on an inverted relation between the concordance established by the plot prevailing over discordance about intentional aims, in the plane of the experience of time (IA *ibid* p42-43).

In sum, the narrative text finds a notion of time that not only corresponds to everyday practices but opens another discourse that engenders our perplexities concerning human time. A narrative articulation helps resolve these. One has only to think in cinema and in theatrical and television drama of the power of manipulating time these play with. The use of flashback, of memory and memory dislocated by other events influencing present behaviour and understanding; the use of forward projections laying out projected dreams, hopes, fears and expectations that influence the shape of actions taking place in the present. In literature time is manipulated in similar ways and the effect enhanced by careful use of voice, tense, point of view and other devices. In *Time and Narrative vol 2* Ricoeur explores these further.

In his eyes the aporetics of time in the cosmological sense of Augustine described by physics and history, and the everyday phenomenological sense of time that is experienced in concrete life, constitutes the major transition between the configuration of text internal to its narrative, and the refiguration of action in the mind of the reader brought about by the written narrative, an effort of thought that he examines in great detail in *Time and Narrative vol 3*. It does so because narrative imitates action and offers an articulation to an experience of time that would otherwise remain the province of physics, or the province of philosophy and endless paradoxes that risk lapsing into sophistry.

Time and Narrative 3 draws out the consequences of metaphorical reference in the semantic innovations of language by extending it to narrative statements. Matters become complicated if the notion of reference is held too closely to the notion of a material re-description, or caught up with extensional logic. Ricoeur refers to Heidegger at this point, and the post-Heideggerian theory of truth, of its radical critique of the correspondence theory of truth, and the appeal of that for a notion of truth as manifestation. Ricoeur argues that metaphorical and narrative statements in the sphere of reading, aim at re-figuring 'reality' in two ways:

1. By *uncovering* or *disclosing* concealed dimensions of human experience.
2. By *transforming* our vision of the world. It is interesting to me that here

Ricoeur should turn to a visual, ocular, metaphor through which to express his idea.

The final resolution lies in the act of reading. In asking who or what refers? The answer is the reader. The figure who brings about the intersection of the possible world of the written narrative and text and the real world of everyday experience and existence is the reader. Ricoeur concludes by offering a theory of reading. *Reading* is where two 'strategies' clash: that of the author riding under the banner of the narrator who attempts to *persuade*, and that of the reader who acts with a willing suspension of disbelief in the encounter with the text. The second has the character of a game, even, says Ricoeur "a battle" that involves suspicion and rejection that "allows the reader to practice the distance of appropriation" (HWL2 *ibid* p18).

2.9.1 Plot and emplotment

The three volumes of *Time and Narrative* take up the problem of reference within the framework of literary language and its use. The ‘problem’ Ricoeur now sees is the process of the movement, the passage he calls it, from the illocutionary configuration of a world within the narrative text, to the refiguration of the real world belonging to the reader, outside the narrative text (HWL2 *ibid* p16). The literary device Ricoeur chooses to energise this process is the Aristotelian notion of *muthos*, the plot. In the *Poetics* Aristotle gives a mimetic function to the plot in the praxis of action in the world. It is the dynamic of emplotment that provides Ricoeur with the key to opening the relation between narrative and time. Three mimetic modes are identified as constituting the mediation between the two building from a base of practical experience on the part of the author, through the text, to its culmination in the imagination and practical experience of the reader. The reader is the ontological site for the operations of meaning and reference, that semiology ignores. What finally is described is not just any reality, states Ricoeur, but the reality belonging to the world of the reader (IA *ibid* p29).

Narrative language, as Ricoeur conceives matters, is no longer closed in upon itself (a criticism directed towards semiotic systems thinking that refuses to consider language open to any extra-linguistic sources). This is so because narrative language refers to actions by human beings who are following a relation that has no equivalent. That is the relation of *mimesis*. Mimesis is not as Plato held it to be, a mere deceptive imitation at best concerned only to represent the appearance of things, and not reality itself; an imitation of an imitation that is not true knowledge or an acquaintance with the beauty of forms; something in Russell’s lambent phrase “that rots the brain” (Russell 1946: *History of Western Philosophy*).¹⁰⁶ Mimesis according to Ricoeur is a matter of a “re-organisation at a higher level of significance and efficacy” of narrative language that he formulates as *being-as* (HWL2 *ibid* p16-17).

2.9.2 Mimesis

In Ricoeur’s way of thinking, mimesis assigned to metaphorical utterance and narrative language leads to an enrichment of the language of the text because it adds levels of multiple mediations and new meanings to the sense of the reference. Mimesis for Ricoeur thus ensures the transition from Configuration in the narrative to and between Refiguration of the world of praxis. In *Time and Narrative* vol.1. he outlines a three-fold model of mimesis that he names *mimesis*₁, *mimesis*₂, *mimesis*₃. These correspond to three stages in the construction a text:

Pre-figuration (*mimesis*₁) - Configuration (*mimesis*₂) - Re-figuration (*mimesis*₃).

¹⁰⁶ Russell, Bertrand 1946/2009: *History of Western Philosophy*. Oxford. Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. Routledge.

Mimesis₂ constitutes the pivot and turning point that opens up the world of the plot and in so doing, institutes the literariness of the work of literature (1984: *Time and Narrative: Threefold mimesis*. p53).¹⁰⁷ Ricoeur notes that hermeneutics is concerned with reconstructing the entire arc of operations “by which practical experience provides itself with works, authors and readers” (*ibid*). In this configuration, *mimesis*₂, fulfils a mediating function. The task of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the set of operations “by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering”. This is to be given to readers, who receive and thereby enrich their lives and “change their acting” (*ibid*). Semiotics on the other hand is concerned only with the analysis of the syntactic structures of the configuration of a work of literature.

From this analysis of the three-fold structure of mimesis emerges the parallel triad of Author (Locution) - World of the Text (Illocution) - Reader (Perlocution). It is the Reader who completes the circuit and brings the process to fruition, as we have seen.

2.9.3 Narrative Identity.

In *Time and Narrative* vol 2, Ricoeur develops the idea that a literary text and a narrative text in particular, projects before itself a possible world, a *being-as* that is the world of the text. The narrative bifurcates into two streams, the fictional and the historical. History remodels the past on the basis of traces that have been left behind; approximations of the historian on the basis of what is known and on what is absent. The mutual constitution of time and narrative provokes the notion of *Narrative Identity*. This is of great interest to me in the frame of photo-documentary narratives, where I propose the idea of *photographing* being a form of writing history, and the products often fulfilling the role of cultural myths; touchstones by which people in the present guide their understandings of themselves by referring to an historical past in recent memory and outside of memory inscribed in the individual photographs, and given form in the photo-narrative. Narrative Identity in Ricoeur’s terminology is “the unstable product of the intersection of history and fiction”. Ricoeur draws this as the most solid conclusion from the mutual constitution of time and narrative. (IA *ibid* p48).

Both offer us a world of the imagination, a possible world, but nonetheless a place I, the reader, can think of inhabiting, enrich myself by “carrying out there my own-most possibilities” (HWL2 *ibid* p17). The referencing of the narrative now confronts the aporias of time from two directions, fictional and historical, which adds to the complexity of the problem.

¹⁰⁷ Ricoeur, P 1984 *Time and Narrative*. Vol 1. Trans. By K. McCoughlan and D. Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

2.10 Summary.

Faced in the 1960s with the ontological challenge of the theory of Structuralism and its offshoot, semiology, theory that focused analysis on the internal relations of systems of relations between signs, modelled on those found in the linguistic analysis of language, Ricoeur felt compelled to revise and expand his thesis of a phenomenological hermeneutics modelled on symbolism as a structure of language. Ricoeur accepted the thesis that Language is central to our grasp of the world, the essential instrument through which human beings constitute and articulate their understandings and interpretations of their particular worlds they inhabit. Critically Structuralism removed any extra-linguistic phenomenon from the frame of reference. This included the human subject and the diachrony of history. For Ricoeur this was unacceptable. Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of language and meaning, of grasping how we make sense of things. Ricoeur argued there could be no meaning if any social analysis was not anchored in the subject situated in time and history.

Keeping his allegiance to language and to phenomenology intact, Ricoeur turned to the model of the text. Ricoeur now defines hermeneutics "...as the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts...". The key idea will be "...the realisation of discourse as a text.." (1991: *The Task of Hermeneutics*. FTA p53-74). Ricoeur adopts to his revised and critical hermeneutics, the central paradigm the model of the Theory of the Text, the Theory of Action, and the Theory of History. The Theory of the Text is the fulcrum upon which these three functions pivot and interweave, discourse is the power that energises it.

Unlike semiotics in which language is restricted to the word and restricted meanings, the text opens language in use as speech and especially as written into texts to new possibilities, the capacity to handle multiple meanings in an expression, and most tellingly to new innovations in semantics. Inscription into written text implied an intentional author and the work of the text, whether factual, fiction, historical, fantasy or poetry and drama implied discourse, a range of inter-subjective interactions greater than those of dialogue and face-to-face speech. Inscription follows rules of grammar and procedures that gave language a greater range of expression and meaning than speech alone. Notably in the use of metaphor, emplotment and narrative. These in turn imply a basis in time. Inscription implies the text achieving an independence from the author and was accessible to anyone literate in the language in which it was written. Being independent a text develops a history of its own.

The text creates an imaginative and structured world within itself, a world of the text. The final part of the equation is the reader. In the reader the text finds its fulfilment. Thus hermeneutic discourse is defined as the act of "*a someone saying something about something to someone*".

2.11 Text to Action and Practical Reason.

The ability to action is a competence of Ricoeur's 'capable person' living in society. It returns the self as subject to the central concern of the dialectical discourse of hermeneutics. The subject is conceived as a dynamic agency engaged in inter-subjective relations with others, and inter-actions within the public sphere of their joint lives, meeting and discussing matters of common interest, influencing their thoughts and actions, sometimes in co-operation and sometimes in conflict, and where possible reaching a common judgement.

A shift from a hermeneutics of the text towards a hermeneutics of action was confirmed, for Ricoeur, by the analysis he made of the narrative function laid out in the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* (IA *ibid* p38). There he teased out ramifications about the problem of inter-subjectivity provoked by textuality and narrative. The theory of Action in the philosophy of action could, he saw, raise this to the level of practical reason, in the context of the phenomena of conflict and co-operation (IA *ibid* p37).

By 'Action' Ricoeur means that a text, which he considers to have a propositional content and a reference, acquires an illocutionary force, it *does* something through the process of referring in making sense of the content. The text becomes detached from its author and develops consequences of its own. The text thus moves from the philosophical plane to the social dimension of action. The text enters into the wider realm of the public sphere and the social imaginary.

Action is the act of someone saying something about something. Actions imply goals which commit the agent to activity. Actions also refer to motives which explain why someone does or has done something in ways that are intelligible and in which one event leads to another. Actions have agents who do things for which they can be held responsible morally, that may have long term consequences for which they may or may not be accountable. Moreover to act is always to act with others. Inter-actions can take the form of co-operation or conflict whose contingencies rejoin us to the circumstances of the activity occurring (TN 1 *ibid* p55).

Ricoeur proposes a theory of action as a "semantics of action". The thesis is based on Ricoeur's underlying assumption of the "ontological vehemence" underlying his conception of language. The semantics of action expressed through the analysis of sense and reference that he performs, is based upon the conviction that discourse does not exist simply for its own glory, but that discourse is the attempt, in all its forms, to carry experience to language and language into the social domains of imagination and practical reasoning. It constitutes a manner of inhabiting and being-in-the-world, which both precedes it, and demands to be said.

In turning to an action centred hermeneutics Ricoeur is again showing his willingness to extend his philosophical interests into the social sciences and learn from them. Within

anthropology contemporary to Ricoeur, for example, there are numbers of attempts to move theorising away from a society based structural-functional paradigm towards more subjective and action centred procedures. Amongst his contemporaries this can be seen in the work of the Norwegian Barth (b.1928) and his theories of 'transactionalism' worked out in the Afghanistan/Pakistan border regions; and the process centred work of the English anthropologists Leach (1910-1989) on kinship in general, and Turner (1920-1980) on ritual, symbolism and rites of passage amongst the Ndembu of Zambia, in the 60s and 70s; the Canadian, Lee (b.1937) and the American, Wilmsen (b.1930s) debating the political economy of the !San people of the Kalahari and Botswana; and the Sri Lankan Obeyesekere (b.1930s) and the American, Sahlins (b.1930) in the 80s, debating the rationality of indigenous peoples and the historical circumstances of the death in February 1779 of Captain Cook at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii (Barnard 2000: *History and Theory in Anthropology*).¹⁰⁸ Within the sphere of the anthropology of Art, the English visual anthropologist, Gell (1945-1997) began to develop ideas about western and non-western art as a form of instrumental agency, rather than objects of aesthetic contemplation, or symbolic representations of spiritual beliefs. Work that was published posthumously after his untimely death (Gell 1998: *Art as Agency*).¹⁰⁹

The figures of Simmel (1858-1918) and Weber (1864-1920) stand out in the history of sociology, Simmel who amongst much else, introduced the notion of 'reciprocity' based on the notion that the social exists when two or more people inter-act with each other and the behaviour of one is seen to be a response to the other. Weber, who wrote on a wide variety of sociological topics, emphasised that the study of social action through interpretive methods should be the central concern of sociology. Weber emphasised the Hegelian notion of Spirit, *geist*, as a driving force, and from Dilthey the notion of Understanding, *verstehen*; from Goethe he borrowed the notion of "elective affinity" with which to describe the relations between ideology and practice as integral to the methodology for the interpretation of social institutions, based on the thesis of understanding the purpose and meaning individuals attach to their actions. The varieties of action centred theories, which includes Marxism and neo-Marxist 'Frankfurt School' critical traditions, are complex perspectives and blendings of ideas, elements of which deeply influenced the thought of Ricoeur within his hermeneutics of action. As they have those of his contemporary, Habermas, whose studies of the processes of institutions of the public sphere of society, and the values and inter-actions informing the social imaginary of social groups within it were well known to him (Habermas 1981: *The Theory of Communicative Action*).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Barnard, A 2000: *History and Theory in Anthropology*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁹ Gell, A 1998: *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

¹¹⁰ Habermas, J 1981: *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol 2 trans. T McCarthy. Cambridge. Polity Press.

In Ricoeur's hands, "Acting" in terms of a practical philosophy, constitutes the core of an Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian ontology of *being-in-the-world*, or put another way, *the act of inhabiting the world* (IA *ibid* p38). Action and acting is seen as a form of instrumental agency and a means of inter-acting with and influencing the thought and actions of others. It is Ricoeur's claim for hermeneutics that action that is meaningful may be rendered objective and 'fixed' in ways similar to the fixation that occurs in the inscription of writing (1991: *The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action considered as a Text*. In FTA *ibid* p144-167). This process of objectification is made possible by the identification of some inner traits of action that are, in his view, similar to the structure of speech and the speech act (Austen *ibid*).

These structures of *doing* that is, acting, translate into language as the structures of kinds of Utterance. A dialectic within the process of action conceived as *transaction* opens the way to detach the *meaning* of the action from the *event* of the action (see Barth *ibid*).¹¹¹ A semantics of action for a practical philosophy turns attention upon an analysis of the *conceptual scheme* in which are inscribed those notions found in ordinary language that apply to human action. Notions, for example, such as intentions, circumstances, motives, deliberation, motion, passivity, intended and unintended results, reflection. These operate in action as a *network* of considerations (HWL2 *ibid* p19). What counts for making sense is that they all belong in the same network of considerations. Within the network relations of inter-signification govern their meanings. This means that knowing how to make use of any one is to know how to make use of the whole network in a meaningful and appropriate way.

This, says Ricoeur, amounts to a coherent language game. This is not a simple list of constituent parts of the network but the transcendental condition for any discourse about action. Network theory in the social sciences places emphasis on the whole network being instrumental. An effective way of proceeding is to identify questions that can be posed about the subject of any action: who, what, why and how. All are incorporated into the network of questions governing their inter-related meanings. Who defines the agent or agency that sets the network into motion. Who, I have suggested, asks first the question *if* in establishing the premises from which action can flow. *If* such and such is the case, then this and this, or that and that can follow. An action does not simply happen it is something that is made to happen, it is a predicated activity. What happens next is the observation of the predication and the making of utterances that in their constitution can be true or false. What makes them so is their assertion about a state of affairs.

The Why of action implies motive. A motive is a motive for or a motive to. Thus it is logically implied in the notion of action. Motives are not Humean causes, as such, but

¹¹¹ Frederik Barth is a Cambridge trained social anthropologist and author. The classic text for his theories of transactional analysis is, Barth, K 1959: *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans*. London. Athlone Press.

better understood as “reasons for doing something”. Extrapolating from Strawson,¹¹² Ricoeur notes that an action superimposes a certain configuration of physical movements upon an accomplishment that can be interpreted in terms of motive and intention. They are not juxtaposed but a mixed category that he identifies as that of *desire*.

‘Desire’ brings together psychic and physical categories reserved for persons and things. ‘Desire’ thus has a meaning that can be spoken of in the language of intentions, and as a force using the language of physical energy. Ricoeur identifies three typical contexts in which motives are experienced as the reason to do something that he poses as questions:

- 1) What led you to do that?
- 2) Why do you habitually do that?
- 3) What made you do that?

The three questions stand in a relation of reciprocity such that they can be brought together under a heading of *affections* or *passions*. Thus the phenomenon of desire leads us to say that motives for action would not be motives unless they were also causes, but not in the Humean sense of a causal antecedent with no logical connection to the result. Motive and cause express together a disposition towards action.

2.12 Agency and moral ‘Ascription’.

Action implies an agent and a relation of dependency, as recognised long ago by Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle points to a kind of wisdom, *phronesis*, whose depths, according to Ricoeur, he was unable to fathom. (HWL2 *ibid* p24).

Ricoeur suggests the problem can be resolved (mediated) by the refinement of the theory of predication in general and the theory of semantics of action in particular. He proposes that the semantics of action leads to giving an agent the power of *ascription*. By this he means an action attributed to an agent differs logically from mere attribution. Ascription is an action in the moral and juridical sense, whereas attribution is action in the logical sense. That is a distinct signification that transforms particular cases into exceptions. He chooses to do so because he can see this will lead to the question of the identity of the self, which as we have seen is an abiding thread running throughout all is philosophy (*ibid*).

Strawson observes that physical and mental characteristics belong to the individual person. Their owner can dispose of them or not. The question is whether these are idiomatic or universal expressions, in terms of the meanings assimilated to the transcendental terms for the semantic field of action in question. Ricoeur suggests there are good reasons to think they are that can be verified. It is of action that we first say such things as “my action”, “your action”, “his/her action”. We do something similar with regard to intentions, saying “someone intends to...”. We can understand an intention as an intention, but if the author is removed we effectively restore it to the person in question as being their own. The significance of this for Ricoeur is that this is what an agent does when considering the options open to them, and deliberates on which to follow.

¹¹² Strawson, P 1959: *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. London. Methuen.

According to Aristotle, with whom Ricoeur agrees, “*Ascription consists precisely in the agent’s reappropriation of their deliberations and preferences...*”. Thus to decide, to choose and make up one’s mind is to cut off from discussion one’s own other contemplated options (HWL2 *ibid* p25). Motive is thus barely indistinguishable from intention, and its belonging to an agent is as much a part of its meaning as is the logical tie to the action for which it is the cause. Thus to mention motive is to mention also the agent. For Ricoeur there is “something particularly strange, paradoxical, involved here” (*ibid*). The paradox lies in the perplexity of accounting for an author, which is a terminable enquiry, and generally the ‘who’ designated by a proper name, and the accounting for motives for an action which is indeterminable and lost in a thicket of mixed motivations that lose themselves in a fog of internal and external influences.

It is this odd, asymmetrical relation that is part of the definition of *ascription*. This being the case then it becomes a function of the whole network constituting a semantics of action that makes sense of the expression *agent*. Ricoeur concludes from this “mastery of the whole network is comparable to learning a language, and that understanding the word ‘agent’ is learning to how to place it correctly in this network” (*ibid*). He proposes that agency and ascription can be best understood in a style of transcendental argument that intends to show the notion of causal efficiency is the condition of possibility of certain effective procedures that, in the final analysis, depend upon the agent.

In order to proceed with the argument Ricoeur distinguishes between actions that produce immediate changes and actions whose effects are distant in time and place. Any attribution now to a specific agent is problematic because the agent is no longer present in the long term consequences of their activities.

Action thus becomes detached from its agent, in much the same way as a text becomes detached from its author, and discourse detaches writing in relation to speech.

There are various consequences well known to historians and jurists, for example. The question arises are long-term consequences of an action still the work of their agent, or the circumstances intended or unintended of other human actors? Another complication is that everyone’s actions are not only caught up in the external course of things, but get incorporated into the social course of human affairs. This is of great interest when the two thesis Case Studies are considered. Both revolve around ethical implications of agency and action.

Case Study 1, *Regeneration, Waterside South* examines a social circumstance of conflict in the present and immediate past with significant consequences for the future. As the agent responsible for the photography and book, to what degree am I involved? In Case Study 2: *Imperium 1326* there are two possible lines of involvement. One relies on the scholarship of historians and archaeologists to give meaning to the photography. The other is my responsibility to future students, teachers and others using the DVD of the

photographs in the belief they accurately describes the forensic pathologies they claim and that they can learn to recognise. But first we must consider the process of inscription and fixing action.

2.13 The Fixation of Action.

The composition of a plot within the narrative is grounded in an understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic character, and its temporal character. (TN1 *ibid* p54). The discourse of the written text inscribes and fixes intentional actions and activities. We need to look briefly at how that might be achieved.

Ricoeur proposes that there is a three-way debate to be found between the emplotment of lived experience, historical time, and fictional time. There is a noteworthy property of discourse in the written narrative, that of “Utterance”. Utterance is given voice in discourse. To recap for a moment. Ricoeur initially proposes that Discourse has four distinctive traits:

First, discourse is always realised temporally and in the present (whereas language is virtual and a-temporal).

Second, discourse has a subject, a Locutor. It refers back to a speaker, a Who is speaking? It has a complex set of indicators that amount to an instance of discourse as being self-referential. (Language by contrast does not have a subject).

Third, discourse is always about something. It has an Illocutionary reference. It refers to a world that it claims to describe, to express or to represent something. In discourse the symbolic function of language is realized, made actual. (Language by contrast lacks “a world” as it also lacks subjectivity and temporality. Signs within a language refer only to other signs and their syntactical relations within the same system).

Fourth, in discourse all messages are exchanged. Discourse alone has a world that includes another person or persons, an Interlocutor to whom the discourse is addressed. (Language on the other hand, presents only the condition of possibility for communication, for which it provides the necessary codes) (1991: *The Model of the Text* in FTA *ibid* p144-167).

To this must be added the final and defining goal of discourse, the reader. The notion of the reader introduces a further dimension to discourse and the notion of utterance, that of Perlocution. Perlocution implies a world inhabited by the reader, a public sphere and social imaginary whose concerns and values will shape and modify the illocutionary references of the discourse of the text.

The fixation of the ascriptions of an agency parallels the inscription of speech in writing and surpassing it. Within the field of documentary photographing, fixation of action is clearly similar to the same fleeting reality when all the faculties converge into, what for Cartier-Bresson, is “...that moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy...” (Cartier-Bresson 1999 *ibid* p16).

Drawing upon the speech act theories of Austin¹¹³ and Searle,¹¹⁴ Utterance we find has a three fold structure:

1). The Propositional or Locutionary: the act of saying and doing something. Searle attributes to this the notion that someone performs the action.

2). The Illocutionary act: the saying about something, that is the inscribing of action and ascribing the intentions motivating it into an intelligible, rule governed and ordered creation that is the metaphorical, emplotted narrative of the world of the text. Searle attributes to this the ethical dimension that by acting we mean what we do and say.

3) The Perlocutionary: the what we do by saying and acting, as above addressed to an audience and the responses of the reader. Searle attributes to this the notion that utterance addresses an audience, in speech within the vicinity, in writing distant and apart. Unwrapping these categories Ricoeur reveals their implications. The Locutionary act is fixed in the sentence. The sentence becomes a propositional utterance that has meaning, that because of its sign structure can be identified and re-identified in language. I place the single photographic image into this category. The Illocutionary act dwells on the expressive aspects of prosody in speech, and literary devices such as metaphor and emplotment, voice, mood etc in the poetics of the written text. In physical actions this calls into play motive, intention, character, inter-subjective relations within the public sphere. It articulates what is known expressively, is the realm of semantic innovations and the unravelling of multiple levels of meaning. The Perlocutionary act draws together the illocutionary contained in the world of the text and the actions that lie behind that, and the realm of the reader in imagination and active response. The Perlocutionary is the realm of discourse as stimulus. It is the least inscribable and the least predictable because it acts upon the emotions, the intellect, the imagination and the affective dispositions of people that are complex and variable.

Conceived in this way, discourse brings together in its varieties of utterance text and action. Text and Action is a Heideggerian project of discourse as *projecting-a-world*, a becoming that is disclosed, which Ricoeur argues, is its justification as a social action wrought in Language, to establish a certain relation of man to the world. It is the task of hermeneutics to interpret and make that intelligible (1991 *ibid*).

2.14 Summary

“Only man has a world..” writes Ricoeur. A text has only a situation within it. The text has sense and it has reference that we might call ostensive. Readers have an ensemble of reference that are imaginatively opened up by the text. To understand a written text in this way is, says Ricoeur, to understand ourselves and at the same time, to understand a new dimension to being-in-the-world and be enriched.

¹¹³ Austin, J. L 1962: *How to do things with Words*. The William James Lectures delivered in Harvard University in 1955. 2nd edition, edited by J.O.Urmson and Marina Sbisa. The Clarendon Press. Oxford University Press.

¹¹⁴ Searle, J. R 1969: *Speech Acts. An essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic is not only one of amplifying the possibilities of language, it is also a hermeneutics of emancipation of the social person. By this I mean not only is the hermeneutic open to innovations in language and semantics in generating new forms of interpretation, meaning and understanding, it is also open to anybody who wishes to participate. Ricoeur's hermeneutic of the text is a public sphere where subjects participate as equals, that is open, inclusive, where equality and freedom of expression are welcomed as part of a rational discussion in the common good. Hermeneutics in Ricoeur's hands also reflects his deep concern for the conscious Subject in self-realisation and individual freedom.

His later work extended hermeneutics into what he calls a "little ethics", and the realm of practical, pragmatic reason. This has much to do with an ideal of democratic politics, in the sense of examining through a hermeneutic of practical reasoning the grounds of moral and epistemic values, such as jurisprudence, liberty, rationality and truth, and their depredations by external forces. Ricoeur's 'capable person' is both a social and autonomous individual embedded in history that can be understood in something like Kant's sense of *Mündigkeit*. Sometimes translated as 'maturity' what this means for Ricoeur is the capacity to use one's own reason and to think for oneself. His thinking here bears close resemblance to elements in the thought of Habermas for whom emancipation means not only the freedom of the autonomous individual to think for themselves and act accordingly (within social, moral and legal norms), but the identification and fostering of social institutions that create the conditions of possibility for that (Finlayson, J.G 2005: *Habermas*).¹¹⁵

I think it is where Ricoeur's lifelong commitment to philosophy and to Protestant theology merge.

¹¹⁵ Finlayson, J.G 2005: *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford. OUP.

Chapter 3

On social documentary photography.

Themes and variations.

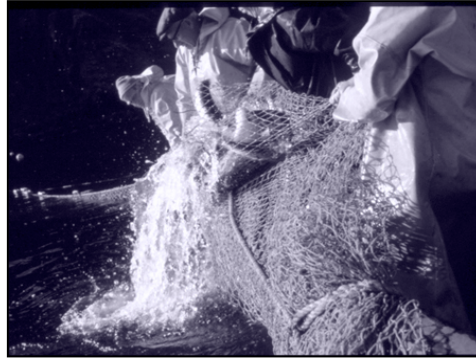


Fig 3.1: Salmon fishing using off-shore drift nets. Gardenstown. Moray Firth. 1980.

"...I can think of no more exciting challenge than having to go out, day after day, with a camera to record the contemporary scene, helping to make a small contribution towards an understanding of our complex, and frequently, exasperating, society..." Grace Robertson 1989 (Grace Robertson: Picture Post Photographer).¹

Introduction.

Themes.

Social documentary photography is, to my mind, one of the great gifts of photography. Creativity and imagination are central to us all with music, perhaps, the greatest, deepest and most profound of all the arts. But I can neither compose nor perform, only, in the words of Rostropovich, eavesdrop from the audience and be content with what I can do, make photographs. Social documentary is one of two fields where I practice professionally the other being studio lighting and still life, another form of documentary.² I contextualise my documentary interest primarily within the social and historical sciences. The focus is with the lives and traditions of others, and with the literary form of the narrative visualising essay and short story book. That is where I am educated and is the context for this thesis.

¹ Robertson, G 1989: *Grace Robertson, Picture Post Photographer: Photojournalist of the 50s*. London. Virago.

² Both interests are reflected and made full use of in the two photography Case Studies I have made for this thesis.

I start from a three-fold structure of: *Photography* - the science and technology; *The Photograph* - the single image; and *Photographing* - the intentional action of making photographs. In this thesis I am placing the emphasis upon *Photographing*. That is with the process of putting photography to pragmatic use and with questioning what it does. Ricoeur's formula, borrowed from von Wright, of *intentional interventions* in the world is an apt description, combining as it does motivation with cause, explanation with understanding, in a hermeneutic about something in the world inscribed visually in a form with the characteristics of a written text (Ricoeur 2013: *Hermeneutics*. p98).³ In Ricoeur's formula for hermeneutics: *the act of someone saying something about something to someone (ibid)*.

Ricoeur came to call his style of philosophy a philosophical anthropology centred in language. I think of social documentary photography as a photographic anthropology centred in the visual that uses photography as a means to document human society. There is to my mind a close and natural affinity between the two perspectives. Both are predicated as intentional interventions in the world that have a semantic and epistemological duality of the human subject : object that determines action and gives meaning in the world. Central to both the epistemology of Ricoeur's hermeneutics and the epistemology of social documentary interpretations there is a common single dilemma. That is: *how to combine the perspective of a particular subject, an agent living within the world, with an objective view, whether factual or fictional, of that same world, in ways that include both subjective and objective viewpoints in the single narrative?* Mediating between them is the dilemma of *Interpretation*. What does it mean? How do we achieve it? Is there a way to distinguish between different qualities of interpretation? Who is interpreting? There are many questions and the answers are not, it seems to me, always obvious or easy.

My intention in this chapter is to map where I stand philosophically to the theory and practice of a humane social documentary photography. I shall refer to the two photographic Case Studies that I have made for this thesis, and to a selective choice of documentaries made by others under the general heading of "the concerned photographer" that exemplify the kind of work that I wish to discuss. I shall also bring into the discussion Weber's sociological construct of an "elective affinity" as a term of mediation in the dialogue between what we might call the ideology of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and the interests of the pragmatic social actions of making social documentary narratives, in the logic of the inter-relationships of networks of meanings and of possible actions.

Both a social documentary photography and Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspectives are predicated as 'ground up' views and ways of working, whose methodologies enable the

³ Ricoeur P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press.

flow of work to adapt and be modified reflexively to the intention and circumstances in which it is being made. Ricoeur refers to this as the endless capacity for ‘semantic innovation’ when speaking of language, of finding within language the capacity for new multiple meanings and the resources with which authors are able to say things afresh, notably the use of metaphor and metaphorical utterances.

Something very similar can be said for the practices of documentary photography and the individual photographer and the toolkit of photographic expressive and descriptive skills they have for visual semantic innovation and the generation of multiple meanings within the photography, when tasked with saying something worthwhile about this group of people, this particular village, district, event or circumstances of life.

Not least about when tasked with creating a visual dialogue with present interests and historical events, such as those mapped by Harper for dairy farmers in upstate New York, whose structure of work and the organisation of their lives is being transformed by technology (Harper 2001: *Changing Works*).⁴ A task that can go deeper into history, as I have with Case Study 2: *Imperium*. In this I am documenting with innovative photography, current interests in forensic science, anthropology and archaeology that link with a unique archaeological specimen skeleton and the political events surrounding it, dated to the early C14th, and quite possibly to a named individual, Hugh Despenser, Chamberlain to the Plantagenet King Edward II. Despenser was executed in November 1326 by being hung, drawn and quartered, and the skeleton osteology shows clearly the peri-mortem trauma associated with that.

What changes is not simply a set of prior beliefs and values, but *attitudes*, ways of responding to the world, ways that are always being challenged. Perhaps by new technologies creating new priorities and/or new ways of working, so for the photographer in the field it is no longer enough to be equipped with three or four cameras and a selection of lenses, but now must also carry a laptop and GPS satellite ‘phone through which to upload their pictures back to base. Or perhaps social attitudes have changed as economic and political cultures change, in for example, agricultural practices, the conduct of war, the representation of women, and a myriad of other ways familiar to us. There are, as Midgley suggests, “...a whole crowd of influences (that) affects everything we do...they all do different work. And they all contribute to a whole that grows from the soil of common sense, to which they are therefore still ultimately answerable...practical patterns of thinking that are appropriate to understanding questions of value (in a Platonic sense)...that are quite closely allied to our emotional nature. We use them when we are puzzled, as we often are, to see how to act...to see which...is more important or more serious...to see which of them we ought to attend to...”(Midgley 2014: *Are you an Illusion?* p152).⁵

⁴ Harper, D 2001: *Changing Works: Visions of a Lost Agriculture*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

⁵ Midgley, M 2014: *Are You an Illusion?* Durham. Acumen Publishing.

Stott in asking the question, “What Documentary Treats” summed up the documentary proposition as “...it treats at first hand of actual experience...an attempt...to treat - with honesty and intelligence - a problem that is at once immediate and yet all but unimaginable...in short, the still unimagined...” (Stott 1973/1986: *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. p46-47).⁶

Our ways of imagining the world determine the directions of our thoughts, and our thoughts in turn feed new ideas into our imaginations in a constant dialectical flow. Imagination is where apparent oppositions are mediated. By bringing them together imaginatively they can be seen often enough to be the necessary sides of the same coin. Each needs the other, and neither alone is sufficient. Social documentary photography is one way we can directly shape our thoughts and vision of the world. The spoken and written word is another way. Our actions in the world is another again, less direct perhaps; and there are many others from which we can choose, including scientific, political, economic, artistic and more.⁷). Social documentary photography is both descriptive and aesthetic, it has to be because each are two sides of the same coin, a matter of reasoning and problem solving and emotion and feeling that complement each other into the making of a satisfying and meaningful whole.

A philosophical and a photographic anthropology.

Ricoeur came to call his style of philosophy a philosophical anthropology. By this he meant a philosophy and anthropology of the capable but fallible human being. His philosophical purpose was to return consciousness and the self-conscious subject back to the centre of philosophy, from which it had been increasingly marginalised by developments in twentieth-century philosophies of mind, matter and a concentration upon language and theoretical models based upon linguistic structuralism. Extended into the humanities and social sciences these reductive theoretical analytics sought to give an account of structures of synchronic relations between signs as objects. Objects that were themselves further reduced to being material manifestations of unconscious neurological structures of the brain. Significantly for Ricoeur, these were objects that had no subject and no history. Any notion of subjectivity was banished as irrelevant.

In calling his style of philosophy ‘a philosophical anthropology’ Ricoeur sought to highlight the return of the subject as necessary and central to proper philosophical understandings. By this he meant a philosophy and anthropology of the capable but fallible human being. Refusing the historical Cartesian dualism of mind vs. matter that arose in Enlightenment thinking, his aim was to return consciousness and the self-conscious subject back to the centre of philosophy in a unity of understanding and interpretation by combining Husserlian phenomenology with a hermeneutic epistemology.

⁶ Stott, W 1973/1986: *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. With a new afterword. London. University of Chicago Press.

⁷ Midgley, M 2002: *Science and Poetry*. London. Routledge.

His chosen model to achieve this is the theory of the text, the theory of action, and the theory of the narrative; a three-fold structure of thought and practice for creating rule bound, and therefore literate and intelligible “ordered creations”.

Borrowing from the Finnish philosopher and logician, G.H von Wright, Ricoeur called written texts *intentional interventions* into the world, a duality of semantics and epistemology whose discourse provides the conditions of possibility under which action is ‘inserted’ into the world by reformulating a dialectic of explanation and understanding in a Kantian structure of sufficient reasons (Ricoeur 2013: *Hermeneutics*. p98).⁸ Von Wright argued that human action could not be explained causally by ‘natural’ or scientific laws, but had to be understood intentionally, a concept he connected with wants and beliefs in a social context (Von Wright 2004: *Explanation and Understanding*).⁹

This structure of text and action in the diachrony of history would, Ricoeur thought, provide a stable foundation for a robust account of the capabilities and vulnerabilities of human beings, their behaviours and activities in making sense of their worlds and of themselves and their place within it. It also creates the conditions for semantic innovations in language and the capacity of language to generate multiple levels of meaning through the use of various literary devices, the most significant of which he identified metaphor for its capacity to open new and unexpected horizons of meaning in the discourse of narrative texts (Ricoeur 1995: *Intellectual Autobiography*. pp3-53).¹⁰

Working at a different level of enquiry, I think of social documentary photography as a photographic anthropology whose intended interventions also have a semantic and epistemological duality that predicates action in the world, that is photographing, within the conditions of possibilities for a reasoned dialectic of explanation and understanding observed phenomena, in ways that necessarily combines subjective and objective viewpoints. The visualising narratives that it produces when the photographs are properly sequenced take the form of a literary text. The single photographs I regard as an equivalence to Ricoeur’s use of the sentence. The sentence is the basic unit of hermeneutic understanding, he says, not the word. A single photograph is a composite of forms that carry meaning, like a sentence is a composite of words. Using literary principles those photographs can be grouped sequentially as we would group sentences, to symbolically structure the social world in meaningful ways. Thus in hermeneutic terms, the sequenced photographs construct an autonomous reality and persist over time, affecting later judgements and influencing how individuals as viewers/readers interpret and re-interpret the events inscribed in various ways. That is why I refer to them as

⁸ Ricoeur P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press.

⁹ von Wright, G.H 2004: *Explanation and Understanding*. Cornell University Press.

¹⁰ Ricoeur. P 1995/6: *Intellectual Autobiography* in Hahn. L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court.

cultural myths, in the anthropological sense of myth (i.e. not as falsehoods) as something necessary that endures in a liminal dimension of space and time.

The sequenced narratives say something, tell a story, and do something, look closely and analytically at aspects of life and the people living through them. That of necessity implies a moral viewpoint and judgements about who, what, where and how to make the photographs. They also raise challenging questions: Who speaks? For what purpose? To whom do they speak? The questions can seem difficult and endless, but cannot be ignored, for they place the photography at an inter-section of social history, hermeneutics, philosophy, visual social sciences, discourse theory, textual criticism, and journalism. Similar questions have been raised in recent decades within academic anthropology about writing, filming and photographing the ethnographies of culture, and continue to be so. (See: Clifford, J and Marcus, G: 1986: *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.¹¹ Ruby 1995: *The Moral Burden of Authorship in Ethnographic Film*.¹² Ruby, J and Banks, M 2011: *Made to be seen: Perspectives on the history of Visual Anthropology*.¹³ Baetens, J 2009: *Theorising Photography as a Social and Artistic Practice*.¹⁴).

The photographic sequence when complete, could well stand alone, or with the addition of minimal captions to provide some context, as in a gallery exhibition. Or they could well be combined with an extensive written text that provides a greater depth of context. These forms are more often published as books, admirable and lasting testimonies to their authors and to their subjects. Exemplifying this is the book *La France de Profil* with photographs by Paul Strand and text written by Claude Roy,¹⁵ and others that I particularly admire and will discuss further, below; by Strand: *Tir a'Mhurain*, with an essay by the historian Basil Davidson,¹⁶ James Ravilious: *An English Eye* with an essay by Peter Hamilton,¹⁷ and Jorma Puranen: *Imaginary Homecomings*.¹⁸

Central to both is an emancipating figure given to us by Ricoeur of “the capable person”; a conception with close affinities to the Weberian concept of an “ideal type”. In Ricoeur’s thought this is a conscious and self-conscious agent who is active in the world. A Heideggerian ontological subject who is a fully conscious and self-conscious person, a

¹¹ Clifford, J and Marcus, G: 1986: *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

¹² Ruby, J 1995: *The Moral Burden of Authorship in Ethnographic Film*. Visual Anthropology Review 11 (2): pp83-93.

¹³ Ruby, J & Banks, M (eds) 2011: *Made to be seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

¹⁴ Baetens, J 2009: ‘*Theorising Photography as a Social and Artistic Practice*’ Visual Studies 24 (2) p93-96. Taylor & Francis.

¹⁵ Strand, P & Roy, C 1952/2001: *La France de Profil*. 2001 edition. Photographs by & Text by Claude Roy. New York. Aperture Foundation.

¹⁶ Strand, P & Davidson, B 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*. Photographs by Paul Strand & Text by Basil Davidson. London. MacGibbon & Kee.

¹⁷ Ravilious, J 2007: *An English Eye: The Photographs of James Ravilious*. 2nd edition. Alan Bennett, Peter Hamilton & James Ravilious. Oxford. The Bardwell Press.

¹⁸ Puranen, Jorma 1999: *Imaginary Homecomings*. Pohjoinen. Oulu. Finland.

being-in-the-world interpreting life, possessed with freedom of will, who is at once, embodied and knowledgeable, socially and technically skilled, who possesses the capability of thoughtful co-operation, foresight and reflection, and yet who is fallible and suffering, quite capable of conflict and making mistakes, yet learning from them to produce new inter-actions, ideas and variations on them. All of this at the same time as having, Ricoeur writes, "... the power of placing objects of desire at a distance...in short a subject who is master of himself and the servant of necessity...". In short, a recognisably social and sociable human being (Ricoeur *ibid* p12-13)¹⁹.

In this shared philosophical and moral universe, Subjectivity is not an irrelevance but the basic stuff and background of experience. Midgley, for example, writes, "...it is an objective fact in the world that our own experiences - the subjective sources of thought - are every bit as necessary for it as the objective ones such as brain cells..." (Midgley 2014: *Are you an Illusion?* p54).²⁰

Ricoeur refuses the Cartesian claim of a self that is immediately transparent to or fully master of itself. That kind of self knowledge comes, he says, only through the agency of our relations to the world and life lived with and amongst others in that world. That is, as a self who is embodied, made possible and constituted by its material and cultural situation, a self who has a personal identity yet is open to other and different descriptions. Ricoeur gave a subtle dual identity to this understanding of the Self borrowing the distinction in identity given in Latin between *idem* and *ipse*.²¹

In Ricoeur's thinking, *idem*-identity is that inner self which gives the self its sense of sameness, the physical and material individual who the self and others recognise as being such-and-such a named person. *Iipse*-identity is the self as agent, a social persona and that part of an individual identity that has the unique ability to inaugurate something new, that can be tied to a subject self, whether oneself or another human being. Thus in Ricoeur's conception a subject (a Self) is a composite that has a dual aspect of both *idem* and *ipse* identities. These he holds to be two irreducible orders of causality: the physical and the intentional. A comprehensive account of social action must show, he argues, how it is related to both of these orders (Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another*).²² This is to be achieved through *attestation* rather than empirical verification, an assurance based upon

¹⁹ Ricoeur, P 1995/6: *Intellectual Autobiography* in Hahn, L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court.

²⁰ Midgley, M 2014: *Are you an Illusion?* Durham. Acumen Publishing.

²¹ The distinction appears in Petronius 'Satyricon', late 1st century AD and described in Tacitus 'Annals': "as Consul he showed himself (*idem*) an energetic and capable administrator...as himself a man who idled into fame, a finished artist in extravagance (*ipse*)...". The epigraph and dedication to T.S.Eliot "The Waste Land" carries the quotation from Petronius: "Nan Sibyllam guidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere", translated as: "For I myself saw the Cumaean Sybil with my own eyes, hanging in a cruet".

²² Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

credence or trust rather than a logical certitude and is a concept that is crucial for Ricoeur's entire anthropology (Dauenhauer 2011: *Paul Ricoeur*).²³

The conceptual perspectives of documentary photography and of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics are, we can see, distinctively different from other post-modern theories and practices, such as psychology, semiotics or economic materialism. These propose that attention should be focused upon structures of relations and set values conceived as being objects, to be analysed through theoretical perspectives that are to be applied 'top down' to the analysis and deconstruction of society and cultural works. Valuable as these are for their insights they cannot by their nature give an account of the individual subject as agent or actor enmeshed in daily life. The problem is that in their schema there is no Subject. Subjectivity is regarded as non-admissible. Nor are structural/linguistic theories, in my experience, of much use to the photographer in the field tasked with making sense of and photographing the everyday flow, continuities and dissonances of social life. However, it is not my intention to enter into a debate in this thesis about a Ricoeurian hermeneutic perspective placed into an opposition to structuralist thought but to mark the difference, nor placed in opposition to the pros and cons of modernist and post-modern photography theory in general. That must remain for another time and another place.

In the warp and weft of affinity between them, social documentary photography as anthropology and a social action of agency can be seen to be, I think, as a typology of Ricoeur's conception of a capable and self-conscious agency that utilises both *idem* and *ipse* identities rationally and emotionally. Ontologically this is an Heideggerian condition of *being-in-the-world*; an agency whose observations and interpretations are concerned to explain different types of existential social activities, the matrix of meanings actors impute to them and the web of social relations in which they are bound, along with the larger processes of historical social and cultural change in which they are embedded, and represent those visually. The desired method for photographing is predicated upon taking a ground upwards viewpoint and working from an insider's perspective and understanding. This can be achieved through repetitions of socially participating observations and, over time, forming interpretations through their dialectic inter-play of performances to arrive in due course at plausible levels of understanding and the making of photographs. Stott writes about the photography of Walker Evans for the Roosevelt Government Farm Security Administration in the 1930s America. "Evans" he writes, "does not 'expose' the reality he treats, he reveals it - or better, he lets it reveal itself...he does not seek out the spectacular, the odd, the piteous, the unseemly...he records people when they are most themselves...he seeks normal human realities..."(Stott 1973/1986 *ibid* p268-269). To do so calls upon the resources of both the inner and outer, social, self of the observing photographer.

²³ Dauenhauer, Bernard and Pellauer, David 2011: "*Paul Ricoeur*". The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward N. Zalta (ed) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/ricoeur/>>

It can be seen this is quite different from a method predicated upon undertaking a search for empirical ‘facts’ in a positivist sense about some form of external reality as object, recording them and imposing upon them an impersonal pre-determined theoretical framework. There is a fundamental dilemma to this: how to combine the perspective of a particular self-conscious subject living in the world (i.e the photographer) with an objective view of that same world lived by others that inevitably includes both viewpoints, as Nagel astutely points out (Nagel 1986: *The View from Nowhere*).²⁴

I take a pragmatists view that I have learned from my practical experience as a studio and documentary photographer, and from the philosophy of Dewey, that seems to me natural. Subjectivity is the basic stuff of experience and experience is where we start from and return to. Thought is part of a “...a huge network that is continuous with the vast world that is its subject matter...an organic element of life, an activity as natural to us as seeing and eating...” writes Midgley and I must agree (Midgley 2014: *Are you an Illusion?*).²⁵ In Dewey’s hands social enquiry is seen as being a self-correcting process in epistemology that is conducted in a specific historical and social circumstance. It requires no foundation in certainty but is fallible, and knowledge accrued is what is warranted through the enquiry (Dewey 1999).²⁶ In short, the photography is a tool, the emphasis is on photographing - rational actions operating within a system of rational, ethical and legal authority, using that tool to do a job.

An Elective Affinity?

In Chapter 1, I suggested a three-fold structure to the universal notion ‘Photography’. To remind ourselves I proposed dividing Photography into three elements: Photography - The Photograph - Photographing. The internal relationship between the three is a constant dialectic. My emphasis throughout the thesis is with *Photographing*. That is, with the act of someone doing and using photography with intention to say something about something to someone.

This is brought out more clearly when we consider that, like other intellectual and practical disciplines, social documentary photography is a disciplinary sub-culture of Photography and found widespread within the arts, sciences and humanities, sitting comfortably alongside non-academic everyday life. Social documentary photography/photographing is not a fixed formula, comparable to say a particular science, but, to borrow a useful metaphor from information theory, more like a web of cultural intelligence, that has spread across continents and across diverse cultural and social landscapes in space and time since 1839 (Dyson 2013: *Darwin among the Machines*).²⁷ To which has been added ever since a cultural history with a breadth and depth of

²⁴ Nagel, Thomas 1986: *The View From Nowhere*. Oxford & New York. Oxford University Press.

²⁵ Midgley, M 2014: *Are You an Illusion?* Durham. Acumen Publishing.

²⁶ Dewey, J., 1999. *The Essential Dewey*. Vol 1. (two volumes edited by Hickman, L. and Alexander, T.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

²⁷ Dyson, G 1998/2013: *Darwin among the Machines*. London. Penguin Books.

evolution and development by professional and amateur photographers with diverse motivations that continues to evolve and to inform current fashions and concerns (Marien 2006: *Photography: A Cultural History*).²⁸

Or perhaps a more fruitful way to think of it, (and to risk mixing metaphors), is through Midgley's cheerful metaphorical conception of the philosophical universe and views of life that have built up over aons of time, as being, "...a great stretch of mental countryside full of different kinds of vegetation - life forms that keep developing to suit what is going on around them..." (Midgley 2014: *ibid*).²⁹ I like that.

Dilemmas.

The first dilemma to be questioned is: how to bring the conceptual perspective and reasoning of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics of text and action into dialogue with the thought and practice of social documentary photography, given their different underlying assumptions?

For Ricoeur language is the ground from which he developed his body of thought in hermeneutics, whilst documentary photography is grounded in the visual. The impetus for essaying a dialogue between them is because I have found there to be an affinity between Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics and social documentary photography that I find natural and compelling. An affinity that begins from the simple observation that both hermeneutics and the photography in thought and practice question and seek justifiable answers to the tricky issue of *interpretation* and how we come to terms with it.

The second and related question deriving from the first is: how to reconcile the tension between internal subjective and external objective perspectives? In both the domain of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of text and action, and in the domain of the praxis of social documentary photography, there is the immediate and fundamental dilemma Nagel points towards: *how* to combine the perspective of a particular, self-conscious subject living inside in the world, (our 'capable person'), with an objective, reasoned and ethical view of that same world lived by others, that inevitably includes the subject actor and his or her viewpoint?

The dilemma has many aspects to it that bring into question ideas about affinity, morality, knowledge, freedom and free will, the self, and the relation of the mind in thought to the physical world, and about relations of agency, action, reasoning and behaviour interacting with others in the world, as Nagel remarks (Nagel 1986: *ibid*).

Weber.

It has been suggested to me, and I accept, that an effective way to bridge the dialogue between the theory and practice of social documentary photography and the philosophical

²⁸ Marien, Mary Warner 2006: *Photography: a Cultural History*. 2nd Edition. London. Laurence King Publishing.

²⁹ Midgley, M 2014: *Are You an Illusion?* Durham. Acumen Publishing.

hermeneutics of Ricoeur, would be to use selectively Weber's sociological notion of an "elective affinity". I see this as a concept mediating between the two.

Weber was concerned to understand more clearly the forces of social action driving historical social change and the meanings social actors gave to them. He devised a typology of forms of social action through which to grasp the connections between traditional and the modern industrial social formations of his time, and the shift he conceived away from traditional ways of thinking (the 'order of nature') and acting within them, to modern ways (the 'moral and social orders'). The new modern ways he thought of as being rational actions by individuals acting within a system of rational legal authority and economy, namely that of the capitalist economic industrial system. There is, however, no simple connection, or 'pre-established harmony' between ideas and material interests, but "...an elective affinity may arise between the two..." (Coser 1977: *Masters of Sociological Thought*).³⁰

Deriving from the literature of Goethe, who in turn derived the notion of elective affinity from Renaissance chemistry, Weber used the term widely in his writings and in different contexts, but nowhere gave a clear definition of it. It is, therefore, not a precise concept in his thought, but one used by him flexibly as an idea, in the Kantian sense, structuring his thought when dealing with varieties of ways of analysing complex sociological relationships of ideas to rational socio-economic interests and actions. Weber worked within a Kantian system of pure reason and the unity of apperceptions, where 'affinity' is held to be the objective ground of all associations of appearance, noumenal and phenomenal. In Kant the doctrine of 'affinity' is meant to explain how the act of synthesis between these two levels of perception is possible; and, furthermore, to explain why empirical objects (i.e. "appearances") satisfy the conditions of human sensibility and understanding. Kant proposed the answer that because all appearances are representations, it is therefore a priori true that all appearances must satisfy the conditions of sensibility and understanding. It must be so because they have a transcendental affinity.

"Elective affinity" in Weber's thought, Howe states, "...stands out as a source through which the order of Weber's discourse becomes just visible within his own work, as the latent structure of his thought..." (Howe 1978: *Max Weber's Elective Affinities: Sociology Within the Bounds of Pure Reason*).³¹ How he used the notion in practice is most notably shown in his linkage of German Protestant Christianity and rational economic social action in an industrialised economy. Weber argued that the rationalisation by people of their economic activity can only be fully realised when notions about prices or wages are put aside. In their place he posits that there stands a positive moral sanction for individual economic acquisitive behaviour that aims to maximise the self interest of the actor. Such a

³⁰ Coser Lewis, A 1977: *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*. 2nd edition 2003. Waveland Press Inc.

³¹ Howe, Richard H 1978: *Max Weber's Elective Affinities: Sociology Within the Bounds of Pure Reason*. American Journal of Sociology. Vol 84. No2 (Sept 1978) pp.366-385.

moral sanction was to be found, he argued, in the Protestant ethic that fostered a spirit of rigorous self-discipline in the conduct of life and relations. Protestant Calvinism promoted a sense of personal responsibility and a work ethic that encouraged believers to apply themselves rationally and methodically to the roles and tasks they were asked to perform in the capitalist, industrialised, occupational world. Weber called upon the notion of elective affinity to clarify how religious belief affected the development of the material culture, as much as was possible. The notion is “elective” because the identification and linkage is a matter of choice, not causal, based upon a wider understanding of the social background. It is not a causal determination as in Marxist thought (Weber 1905: *Die Protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus*. 1958: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons).

The point being, as Howe argues: “....*Within the chaos that the social scientist confronts there is an order; this order exists not only for himself but also for the actors in history and largely affects history's course. The logic of history would be the logic of the elective affinities...*” (Howe *ibid* p368).

An affinity of hermeneutics and social documentary photography.

Howe, by placing the notion as ‘latent’ in Weber’s thought may well be right. In my view it suggests too passive and even negative a view. I see the notion as one of a positive means of mediation between two apparently separate states of affairs. It is a conceptual tool. Seen as such it becomes easier to understand how the notion can be used to mediate between Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and the documentary photography, where we could place the hermeneutics as a form of ideology and the photography as a form of practice and pragmatic utility. I shall come back to this below where I discuss selected examples of documentary photography taken from the canon.

Seeking meaningful order in the complications of existential life, in the praxis of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic thought, concepts and practical reasoning, and in the praxis of social documentary photography, there is a deliberate effort to unify the internal, subjective view with the external objective viewpoint. We can hope to achieve in their inter-actions a dialectic between the two finite perspectives of an hermeneutic understanding and a photographic representation. In their dialogue, that Weber allows us to see as one of an elective affinity, there lies deep within it the recognition that Ricoeur clearly saw, of the finite but boundless nature of a hermeneutics of the text and action grounded in language, that is mirrored in the similar finite but boundless nature of documentary photographing and visual representations of life, and the tension to be found there of the essential incompleteness of both.

I find it natural to think of life and the world in this way: as a constant dialectical process of interpretation and re-interpretation of a world that is finite in its themes, but boundless in its variations. A tension that brings clarity along with perplexity, co-operation along

with conflict, harmony along with schism in their solutions. Their recognition amounts to an imaginative conception of the world, our attitudes, values and behaviours towards it, towards others, and to close the circle, finally to ourselves.

The Documentary Case Studies: a summary.

Both of the conceptions of the philosophical hermeneutic and the photographic anthropologies of subjective agency and the Weberian affinity I perceive between them, are represented in the logic of the two thesis Case Studies. Both have an objective view in mind, to visualise an external object, and both subscribe to the view that there can be no object without a subject. Who else is there? I have photographed, written and published the two Case Studies to accompany this thesis as examples of what I consider to be a natural continuum and developing dialectic of social documentary praxis: from studio still life to observational fieldwork. Both combine similar photographic and research skills, practical descriptive and aesthetic judgements, but in different proportions and degrees, adjusted to suit their purpose. They are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

To summarise: Case Study 1: “*Regeneration Waterside South*” is an ethnographic study for an Arts Council West Midlands Community Arts Project: *Space, Place & Identity 1*, whose purpose was to document and describe a community of people living through a period of rapid social changes in their lives, homes, and communal identity. The study was conducted through a 6 month period of extended participant observation and with the full co-operation of the people concerned. The community studied was suffering social and economic change and their historical identity eclipsed because of the ideology of a Government policy labelled “Pathfinder” that was being imposed upon them. The policy was directed towards the laudable aim of stimulating the rapid economic regeneration of their district of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire in the years 2005-2011.

Things soon began to go wrong. The residents objected, the policy administered through an agency, RENEW North Staffordshire, has resulted in many C19th and C20th houses, shops, clubs and amenities being demolished and their owners and inhabitants resettled elsewhere, to make way for new, modern housing intended for a different, young and professional, social demographic. But few new houses have been built to replace them. The webs of diverse familial, work and social connections that had bound the people together into the fabric of an identifiable and shared historical community for over 100 years was being shredded in the process at the time of the photography in autumn 2007. The photography was exhibited in the district Community Centre, and a local church, in 2008 with the help of the residents and was well received by them (Brown, R.G 2008 (c));³² and later published (Brown, R.G 2008 (d)).³³

³² Brown, R.G 2008 (c): *'Waterside South'*. The Arts Council West Midlands / RENEW North Staffordshire / BArts / 'Place, Space & Identity 1' Community Arts Commission. (EXHIBITION).

³³ Brown, R.G 2008 (d): *'Waterside South'* in Lock, E and Henner, M (eds) 2008: *'The Art of Beauty and the Earth'* Newcastle-u-Lyme. BArts Publishing.

Case Study 2: "*Imperium: 1326 and the death of a tyrant?*" is a studio still life and lighting study that documents a unique archaeological skeleton of a medieval adult male, radio-carbon dated to the early quarter of the C14th. The study takes the use of documentary from current concerns in forensic science deep into medieval history. The skeleton was dismembered and the evidence suggests the individual suffered a Royal State execution by being drawn, hung and quartered. The skeleton osteology carries evidence of numerous and crude bone cutting, bone sectioning and soft tissue severing incisions that have been interpreted as the marks left by the severe peri-mortem trauma suffered from blows struck by axes, swords and daggers. Evidence that forensic science, archaeology and anthropology can interpret. We can see here again an interplay between a State ideology and the reasoned practice of juridical authority, where non-conformity to the law by a person is punishable by death.

The photographs give a detailed macroscopic description of the skeletal osteology and are available as hard copy prints and a teaching and learning inter-active DVD. The DVD enables students to identify and diagnose the varieties of trauma and their possible causes, whether made by dagger, axe or sword, without the need to handle the delicate and friable original bones. The work was photographed at the Department of Archaeology, Reading University in July 2008 and exhibited alongside the original skeleton in 2012 at the new Science Centre, Staffordshire University (Brown R.G: 2012 (a)).³⁴

The Case Studies are published in the form of a hard back book of each, with the photography and a written text that provides a social and historical context for them. A PDF file of each is included in the Appendices (Brown R.G 2012 (b));³⁵ Brown R.G 2012 (c) ³⁶). Both Case Studies have been conferenced (please see Bibliography) and published within an article that draws from this thesis in a new textbook of methods for visual social scientists (Brown R.G 2011(a): '*Photography as process, documentary photographing as discourse*').³⁷ A copy is included in the Appendices.

³⁴ Brown, R.G 2012(a): '*Hanged, Drawn, Quartered: CSI 1326 a.d.*'. The Science Centre. Staffordshire University, UK. (EXHIBITION).

³⁵ Brown, R.G 2012(b): '*Regeneration: Waterside South*'. Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Blurb Inc. on-line <www.blurb.co.uk>.

³⁶ Brown, R.G 2012(c): '*Imperium. 1326 and a Tyrant's Death? Hulton Abbey and an Archaeological Mystery..*'. Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Blurb Inc. on-line <www.blurb.co.uk>.

³⁷ Brown, R.G 2011 (a): '*Photography as process, documentary photographing as discourse*' in Spencer. S 2011: '*Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Awakening Visions*' London and New York. Routledge.

Variations:
The Concerned Photographer: humanist documentary
photography.

“...At our best and most fortunate we make pictures because of what stands in front of the camera, to honor what is greater and more interesting than we are...” (Robert Adams)³⁸

Social documentary photography is, as I mentioned earlier, to my mind one of the great gifts of photography. It never ceases to astonish with the power it has to examine life, both inner and outer, and to express visually the full gamut of human reasoning and emotions. The photography has, for example, the power to amuse (Elliot Erwitt 1998: *DogsDogs*³⁹; Cartier-Bresson 1955: *The Europeans*⁴⁰); to delight and surprise (Doisneau 1990: *Les Auvergnats*⁴¹; Kubota 2004: *Japan*⁴²); to inform and move (Strand 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*⁴³; Ravilious 2007: *An English Eye*⁴⁴; Gaumy 2002: *Men at Sea*⁴⁵); to surprise and horrify (Meiselas 2005: *Pandora's Box*⁴⁶; Rodger 1999: *Humanity and Inhumanity*⁴⁷); to bring a thoughtful contemplation and dialogue with history (Puranen 1999: *Imaginary Homecoming*⁴⁸; Harper 2001: *Changing Works*⁴⁹); Brown 2012(c): *Imperium*⁵⁰ (my Case Study 2); to closely observe external political events in the world that are affecting others for good or ill, and subjecting them to a critical examination (Abbas 1994: *Alla O Akbar*⁵¹; Hetherington 2010: *Infidels*⁵²; Salgado 2000: *Migrations*⁵³; Eugene-Smith 1975: *Minamata*⁵⁴; Brown 2012(b): *Regeneration Waterside South*⁵⁵ (my Case Study 1); a photography that time and again finds cause to celebrate not only people and their culture (Hook 2010: *The Africa Project*⁵⁶); but their land, and to take us, on the one hand, on a

³⁸ Adams, R 2004: *Why People Photograph: selected essays and reviews*. New York. Aperture.

³⁹ Erwitt, Elliot 1998: *DogsDogs*. New York. W.W.Norton & Co.

⁴⁰ Cartier-Bresson, Henri 1955: *The Europeans*. New York. Simon & Schuster.

⁴¹ Doisneau, Robert 1990: *Les Auvergnats*. Paris. Nathan Images.

⁴² Kubota, Hiroji 2004: *Japan*. New York. W.W.Norton & Co.

⁴³ Strand, P & Davidson, B 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*. Photographs by Paul Strand & Text by Basil Davidson. London. MacGibbon & Kee.

⁴⁴ Ravilious, J 2007: *An English Eye: The Photographs of James Ravilious*. 2nd edition. Alan Bennett, Peter Hamilton & James Ravilious. Oxford. The Bardwell Press.

⁴⁵ Gaumy, Jean 2002: *Men at Sea*. New York. Harry N. Abrams.

⁴⁶ Meiselas, S 2005: *Pandora's Box*. New York.

⁴⁷ Rodger, George 1999: *Humanity and Inhumanity: Photographic Journey of George Rodger*. B. Bernard & P. Marlow (eds). Introduction by Henri Cartier-Bresson. London. Phaidon Press.

⁴⁸ Puranen, Jorma 1999: *Imaginary Homecomings*. Pohjoinen. Oulu. Finland.

⁴⁹ Harper, D 2001: *Changing Works: Visions of a Lost Agriculture*. Chicago & London. Chicago University Press.

⁵⁰ Brown, R.G 2012(c): *Imperium. 1326 and a Tyrant's Death? Hulton Abbey and an Archaeological Mystery..* Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Blurb Inc. on-line <www.blurb.co.uk>.

⁵¹ Abbas 1994: *Allah O Akbar: A Journey Through Militant Islam*. London. Phaidon Press.

⁵² Hetherington, Tim 2010: *Infidel*. London. Chris Boot Publishing.

⁵³ Salgado, Sebastio 2000: *Migrations: humanity in transition*. New York. Aperture.

⁵⁴ Smith, W. Eugene & Smith, Aileen. M 1975: *Minamata*. London. Chatto & Windus.

⁵⁵ Brown, R.G 2012(b): *Regeneration: Waterside South*. Newcastle-u-Lyme. rgbphoto-publishing. Blurb Inc. on-line <www.blurb.co.uk>.

⁵⁶ Hook, Harry 2010: *The Africa Project*. Albert Studios Gallery, London.

journey into one man's inner landscape (Joshua-Cooper 1988: *Dreaming the Gokstad*⁵⁷); and on the other on a journey through one woman's experience of her natural landscape (Chafee 1994: *Natural Connections*⁵⁸); to take a tiny sample. To return for a moment to Midgley's metaphor of, "...a great stretch of mental countryside full of different kinds of vegetation, life forms that keep developing to suit what is going on around them..." (Midgley 2014: *ibid*).

The tree of social documentary has grown over the years, from a C19th concern to visualise the often desperate living conditions and poverty of the poor compelled to live in the burgeoning industrialised cities of London and the north of England, so eloquently written about by de Tocqueville, Disraeli, Dickens, and Engels (Newsome 1997: *The Victorian World Picture*).⁵⁹ It has since developed many branches and dropped many seeds into a fertile background soil, and is now a veritable forest that continues to spread and evolve new 'clumps of vegetation'. So what I am writing here is not a history but a map of a sub-culture of photography. Excellent and extensive histories of photography have been written elsewhere, amongst the most accomplished being that by Marien (Marien 2006: *Photography: A Cultural History*).⁶⁰

Humanist documentary is a category of photography that developed rapidly in the 1930s and the 1940, and had evolved into a maturity by the middle years of the twentieth century, a condition marked by the influential 1955 exhibition of photography '*The Family of Man*' organised by Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Steichen 1955: *The Family of Man*).⁶¹ It is a photography that is often called one of "concern", so named after the exhibition '*The Concerned Photographer*' of 1967, organised by Robert Capa, (co-founder in 1947 of the Magnum photo-agency) also held in New York. The phrase was used by Capa to describe the work of himself and his fellow founders of the Magnum co-operative photo-agency in 1948 and of those who joined in subsequent years (Miller 1997).⁶² (Capa 1972: *The Concerned Photographer 2*).⁶³

⁵⁷ Cooper, Thomas Joshua 1988: *Dreaming the Gokstad*. With Graeme Murray and Catriona Grant (eds). Edinburgh. Graeme Murray.

⁵⁸ Chafee, Paula 1994: *Natural Connections: Photographs by Paula Chafee*. Essay by Estelle Jussim. Revere. Pennsylvania. Lodima Press.

⁵⁹ Newsome, David 1997: *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change*. London. John Murray.

⁶⁰ Marien, Mary Warner 2006: *Photography: a Cultural History*. 2nd Edition. London. Laurence King Publishing.

⁶¹ Steichen, E 1955: *The Family of Man*. New York. Jan 24th-May 8th 1955 at The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is on permanent public display in Clervaux, National Audio-Visual Centre, Luxembourg, and is the most seen exhibition of documentary photographs of all time.

⁶² (Miller, R 1997: *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Frontline of History*. London. Secker & Warburg). The exhibition featured the work of Capa, Werner Bischof, David 'Chim' Seymour, Leonard Freed, Andre Kertesz and Dan Weiner. The effect was profound and Miller records that 'concerned' citizens groups sprang up in New York barely a month after the exhibition. A year earlier in 1966 Capa was instrumental in establishing The International Fund for Concerned Photography in New York. In 1974 this became the International Centre for Concerned Photography. Capa said the aim was to 'encourage and assist photographers of all ages and nationalities who are vitally concerned with their world and times'. It has since then offered over 500 exhibitions to more than 3,000 photographers along with teaching classes and seminars. The

The choice of name and the moral connotations it carries is deliberate. Following on from WWII this was the period of the Cold War that carried with it the threat of nuclear catastrophe, of humanity apparently relentlessly divided against itself by ideological, political and cultural differences. The exhibition and the ethos of the members of Magnum lay in emphasising what we have in common over and above parochial differences, and that being our universal common humanity. The ethos carries echoes of the moral philosophy of Levinas, when he writes that a person has to respond to one's own right to be in a responsibility for the Other, "...a fraternity and responsibility for my neighbour, whose face summons me and calls 'me' into question..." (Levinas 1994: *Ethics as First Philosophy*. pp82-84).⁶⁴

The photographer is involved and yet stands at a distance from his subjects, the people and their lives being photographed. He or she must because morally they are trying to give honour and dignity to them in truth. Ethics is integral to humanist photographing in another, Aristotelian sense: that of the responsibility of being, given to us as "...the active exercise of the soul's faculties (i.e. rational activity), in conformity with virtue or moral excellence...", that is found in Aristotle's ethics of character and virtue, *eudaimonia*, meaning 'flourishing' or 'well being' (Aristotle: *Eudemian Ethics*; *Nicomachean Ethics*).⁶⁵ At its best, the photography is marked with a guiding concern of care and compassion for the people being photographed and a desire to ensure them their human dignity, no matter what their actual circumstances. There are many examples but the work of Paul Strand (Strand 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain* ⁶⁶ & *ibid*) and W.Eugene Smith (W.Eugene Smith 1975),⁶⁷ more recently in the work of Sebastio Salgado (Salgado 1997: *Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age*)⁶⁸ of Olivia Arthur (Arthur 2012: *Jeddah Diary*),⁶⁹ and the late Tim Hetherington (Hetherington 2010: *Infidels*)⁷⁰, both of the Magnum Co-operative Photo Agency, are exemplary. Indeed the work of the Farm Security Administration in the USA during the 1930's, and that of the membership of Magnum since the 1940's have been the tap root of the tree of a humane social documentary praxis. But their influence reaches far beyond their confines and pops up everywhere.

exhibition transferred to London in 1969 for the opening of the then new Photographer's Gallery', the first in the UK to be dedicated to showing photography.

⁶³ Capa, C 1972: *The Concerned Photographer 2*. London. Thames and Hudson.

⁶⁴ Levinas, E 1994: *The Levinas Reader: Ethics as first philosophy*. Edited by Sean Hand. Oxford. Blackwell Publishers.

⁶⁵ Aristotle (1976) *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. J. A. K. Thomson, London: Penguin.

⁶⁶ Strand, P & Davidson, B 1962: *Tir a'Mhurain*. London. MacGibbon & Kee.

⁶⁷ Smith, W. Eugene & Smith, Aileen. M 1975: *Minamata*. London. Chatto & Windus.

⁶⁸ Salgado, Sebastio 1997: *Workers, an Archaeology of the Industrial Age*. Oxford. Phaidon.

⁶⁹ Arthur, Olivia 2012: *Jeddah Diary*. London. Fishbar Publishing.

⁷⁰ Hetherington, Tim 2010: *Infidel*. London. Chris Boot Publishing.

The moral concern of the Victorians for social reform can be seen in the work by Thomas Annan in Glasgow (Annan 1877: *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow*)⁷¹ and of John Thompson in London (Thompson 1876: *Street Life in London*),⁷² and in the early years of the 20th in work typified in the USA by Lewis Hine and concern with problems around immigration and child labour in factories, and through the 1930s by the Roosevelt Government agency, The Farm Security Administration, concerned with the economic plight of agriculture and farmers in the Great Plains regions of central America who were suffering drought, crop failures, and consequently poverty (Marien 2006: *Photography: A Cultural History*).⁷³

Within the Victorian amateur photography world, the impulse is rooted in a different place: in the sheer joy, exuberance and pleasure Fox Talbot found in photographing things around that mattered. The pleasure in being able to make good pictures of the things that people valued in everyday life: their families, friends and other people, places, things, events. A simple pleasure given a powerful impetus by George Eastman and his invention of the very affordable Kodak box camera that removed the need to master tricky technical issues (Ford & Steinorth 1988: *You Press the Button, We Do The Rest*).⁷⁴ and often dangerous chemical processes (Jay 1991: *Cyanide and Spirits*).⁷⁵ For others with higher incomes their pleasure came in mastering a difficult medium and making and sharing what they cared about, their histories, travels and memories. Often women found it possible to follow the hobby (Taylor 2007: *Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives 1840-1860*),⁷⁶ (Williams and Bright 2007: *How We Are: Photographing Britain from the 1840's to the Present*).⁷⁷

Others such as the MP, Sir Benjamin Stone, had in mind wider social concerns about the effects of industrialisation on older traditions and customs, echoing those expressed by William Morris and followers of the Arts and Crafts movement apprehensive about the loss of traditional hand making skills to industrial mass production processes. In 1897, Benjamin organised a national photographic survey of English contemporary life using amateur and camera club photographers from across the country, keenly aware of the pace of change and the passing of traditional ways of living (Edwards, James & Barnes 2006: *A Record of England 1897-1910*).⁷⁸

⁷¹ Annan, T 1877: *Photographs of the old Streets and Closes of Glasgow*. Glasgow.

⁷² Thompson, John 1876: *Street Life in London*. With pen portraits by Adolphe Smith. London. Sampson Low, Marston Searle & Rivington Publishers.

⁷³ Marien, Mary Warner 2006: *Photography: a Cultural History*. 2nd Edition. London. Laurence King Publishing.

⁷⁴ Ford, C & Steinorth, K (eds) 1988: *You Press the Button, We do the Rest: the birth of snapshot photography*. The National Museum of Film and Photography. Dirk Nishen Publishing.

⁷⁵ Jay, Bill 1991: *Cyanide and Spirits: an Inside-Out View of Early Photography*. Munich. Nazraeli Press.

⁷⁶ Taylor, Roger 2007: *Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives 1840-1860*. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

⁷⁷ Williams, V & Bright, S 2007: *How We Are: Photographing Britain, from the 1840's to the Present*. London. Tate Publishing.

⁷⁸ Edwards, E, James, P, Barnes, M 2006: *A Record of England 1897-1910. Sir Benjamin Stone and The National Photographic Record Association*. Manchester. Dewi Lewis Publishing.

It is a timeless feeling this and is surely that same exuberance felt by otherwise sober monastic illustrators of medieval manuscripts, such as the C14th Luttrell Psalter, moved to decorate the margins of their pages with comical illustrations of scenes of everyday life. Today it is estimated that some 380 *billion* photographs are being made annually, and people are in the same vein glad to fill photography social websites such as Flickr, Facebook, YouTube *et al* with their photographs that are meaningful to them and for others to see.

A short history.

I am making no attempt here to give a detailed history of documentary photography. There are a number of fine histories already in existence (for example: Marien 2006: *ibid*). I am sketching in some of the basic contours of what seem to me some of the most significant events informing contemporary understandings of documentary practice from within that history.

Within professional photography the tradition of outward looking concern and interest with others came to maturity in the 1950's, across a broad front ranging from journalism to the evolving social sciences of visual anthropology and visual sociology. In the social sciences interest developed along different paths, with British social anthropology more involved in film (Henley 2010: *The Adventure of the Real*).⁷⁹ whilst American visual sociology developed a deeper involvement in stills photography, (Harper 1998: *An Argument for Visual Sociology*).⁸⁰ An interest stimulated by the work of John Collier at one time attached to the Farm Security Administration and now a practising sociologist, who with his son published in the late 1960s one of the first 'guides' to using photography as a research method, later revised in the 1980s (Collier & Collier 1986: *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*).⁸¹

The use of photography was seen as enriching the social sciences. Chaplin, for example, writes of this interest: "...when experienced social scientists who are also skilled photographers aim to produce images which have both documentary reach and aesthetic quality, these can - in combination with verbal text - generate a type of social science understanding which is very rich..." (Chaplin 1994: *Sociology and Visual Representation*. p222).⁸² The International Visual Sociology Association was established in 1981 to encourage academic interest and ran the journal *International Journal of Visual Sociology* until 1986 to promote the research and publication of peer reviewed articles, when under the new editorship of Douglas Harper, the journal was re-titled *Visual Sociology*. It is now published as *Visual Studies* and continues to drive forward developments in the use of

⁷⁹ Henley, P 2010: *The Adventure of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema*. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

⁸⁰ Harper, D 1998: *An Argument for Visual Sociology*. In Jon Prosser (ed) 1998: *Image-Based Research*. London. Falmer Press.

⁸¹ Collier, J Jnr & Collier, M 1986: *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (rev. ed). Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press.

⁸² Chaplin, E 1994: *Sociology and Visual Representation*. London. Routledge.

photography across all social sciences (Knowles and Sweetman 2004: *Picturing the Social Landscape*).⁸³ Themes and variations of ideas, approaches and methods recently re-examined and developed in an excellent handbook by Spencer 2011: (Spencer, S: 2011: *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences:Awakening Visions*).⁸⁴

The modern genesis of a humanist documentary in journalism lies in Germany from about 1928, with the publication of popular news magazines copiously illustrated with photographs 'from life', such as *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and *Munchen Illustrierte Presse*. (This is not to forget the work of Hine in America on Italian immigrant communities in New York and child labour there and elsewhere in the USA that he made from the turn of the century until the 1930's).

Within industry and the arts over the same period of post-WW1 political and economic turmoil there arose in Germany the movement known as '*Neue Sachlichkeit*', or '*New Objectivity*'. Essentially this was a pragmatic way of thinking focused on business and commerce whose central dogma was rationality and logic. Adherents of the movement argued for a practical engagement with the world through rational institutions of industry and government. It manifested itself also in the arts in, for example, the Bauhaus movement founded in Weimar in 1919, with the goal of a new understanding for art's purpose and relationship to society. This was to be formed by uniting art with functional industrial design, the machine, technology and rational organisation if they aspired to precision. Similar ways of thinking flowed into the humanities as a vision of empirical 'hard facts' that emerged within photography as a phenomenology free of a philosophical objectivity and a rejection of the romantic idealism to be seen in Edwardian Pictorialist 'Art' photography. In Germany the new modernist thinking manifested itself not only in the teachings and work of the Bauhaus but, notably, in the music of Hindemith, the theatre of Brecht and in the photography of Renger-Patzsch (1928: *Die Welt ist Schon-The World is Beautiful*)⁸⁵ and August Sander (1929: *Antlitz der Zeit-Face of our Time*).⁸⁶

In America a similar emphasis on rational thinking and a rejection of romantic symbolism and idealism emerged in the later 1920's and 1930's with a photography of aesthetic Formalism and rejection of the late C19th manipulations and symbolism of Pictorial art photography. Most influentially amongst a small group of photographers in the California West Coast who formed themselves into a collective they called *f64*, with members that included Weston, Adams and Cunningham. The group used large format cameras (10"x8" or larger negative size), and small lens apertures to maximise the depth of field, to photograph landscape and natural forms, with an aesthetic ethos of being as objective as

⁸³ Knowles, C & Sweetman, P (eds) 2004: *Picturing the Social Landscape: Visual Methods and the Sociological Imagination*. London. Routledge.

⁸⁴ Spencer, S 2011: *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. London and New York. Routledge

⁸⁵ Wilde, A & J, Weski, T (eds) 1997: *Albert Renger-Patzsch: Photographer of Objectivity*. London. Thames & Hudson.

⁸⁶ August Sander Archive & Susanne Langer 2002: *August Sander: People of the 20th Century*. 7 vols. New York. Harry N. Abrams.

possible by defining their photography as "straight", that is true to the medium and scrupulous in its technical control of exposure, film and print development (Heyman 1992: *Seeing Straight: The f64 Revolution in Photography*).⁸⁷ As indeed Emerson had in England during the 1880's working in Norfolk and the Fens. This was as close to a pure phenomenology as could be imagined. The camera-as-consciousness of something divested of preconceptions and evaluative associations. "...The camera..." said Edward Weston, "...should be used for a recording of life, for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the thing itself...to create aesthetic order out of chaos...the photograph should celebrate rather than disguise the medium's unrivalled capacity to present the world 'as it is'..." (Weston 1973: *The Day Books of Edward Weston vols 1&2*).⁸⁸

Both the new German and the American emphasis on an objective, phenomenological photography became hugely influential and their ideas and practices continue to reverberate today. In Germany especially, it has influenced the art photography of architectural 'typologies' of the Becher's, and the work of their pupils, Gursky, Ruff, Struth, and their many imitators (for example: Hentschel 2008: *Andreas Gursky: Works 80-08*).⁸⁹ In France we see the influence in the work of Doisneau and Ronis (for example: Hamilton 1995: *Robert Doisneau: A Photographer's Life*).⁹⁰ and in England in the work of Hurn, Ray-Jones, Ravilious and many others (for example: Hurn 1979: *David Hurn*).⁹¹

In America the influence has been seminal. It can be seen in the work of their contemporaries, Evans and Strand, in the work of Penn (Penn 2009: *Small Trades*),⁹² and Avedon (Avedon 1964: *Nothing Personal*),⁹³ and in the documentary work of many of the following generations such as that of Rappaport (Rappaport 2005: *Messages from a small town: Photographs inside Pawlet, Vermont*).⁹⁴ It informs the approach to documentary landscape in the work of the 'New Topographic' landscape photographers, who emerged in the 1970's, taking their name from the 1975 exhibition *The New Topographics* that showed new work by Baltz, Shore, Robert Adams, and others (William Jenkins 1975: *The New Topographics: Photographs of man-altered landscape*).⁹⁵ These photographers took their cue from Pop Art. The emphasis shifted from landscape work as a celebration of Nature and of natural forms as with Ansel Adams and Weston, to a celebration of finding beauty in the banal, the ordinary and everyday and the man-made, sentiments that we also

⁸⁷ Heyman, Therese Thau, (ed.) 1992: *Seeing Straight: The f.64 Revolution in Photography*. Oakland Museum. California.

⁸⁸ Weston, E 1973: *The Day Books of Edward Weston, vol 1 & 2*. Intro. Nancy Newhall. New York. Aperture Foundation.

⁸⁹ Henschel, M (ed): *Andreas Gursky: Works 80-08*. Ostfildern, Germany. Cantz Verlag.

⁹⁰ Hamilton, P 1995(a): *Robert Doisneau: A Photographer's Life*. Abbeville Press Inc. USA.

⁹¹ Hurn, D 1979: *David Hurn*. London. The Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁹² Penn, Irving 2009: *Small Trades*. (ed) by Virginia Heckett. Los Angeles. J. Paul Getty Museum.

⁹³ Avedon, R 1964: *Nothing Personal*. With text by James Baldwin. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books.

⁹⁴ Rappaport, S 2005: *Messages from a Small Town: Photographs inside Pawlet, Vermont*. Rappaport, Neil, Bushee, N & Clark E. Vermont Folklife Centre, Middlebury, Vermont.

⁹⁵ Jenkins, William 1975: *The New Topographics: Photographs of man-altered Landscapes*. George Eastman House. Rochester. New York.

find echoed in the documentary photography of Shore, for example (Shore 2004: *Uncommon Places: The Complete Collection*).⁹⁶

A window on the world.

The rational and formalist ideas of the possibility of an objectivity in looking, and a truth to medium of photography in making photographs, came to deeply influence the understanding and making of humanist documentary in the years immediately preceding and especially following WWII. Many of German magazine editors and photographers, such as Lorant, Hutton, Gidal and Mann, came to England and to the USA, fleeing from Hitler and the National Socialist Nazi Government that came to power in 1933 in Germany. There they brought their expertise and ideas to the creation and content of news and feature magazines illustrated with photography such as *'Life'* (1935) in the USA, and *'Picture Post'* (1938) in England. The content of the magazines was marked by high quality photography and high quality written journalism that was felt to open a window onto the world and brought to ordinary people news and understanding of events in the world not otherwise easily obtained.⁹⁷ For a time documentary photography and news magazine photo-journalism seemed to be the future. In their pages humanist photojournalism rapidly passed through a phase of 'adolescence', with photographers learning on the job their trade of how to be a photographer-journalist and storyteller in pictures.

In the USA *'Life'* magazine was produced with big budgets and high production values on glossy paper for a massive circulation numbered in millions across America. Over time it gained enormous prestige as a self proclaimed "window on the world" with an editorial agenda for social and political change some called 'crusading'. *'Picture Post'*, by contrast was British, a magazine produced on a small budget and after WWII printed on poor quality paper stock. Nonetheless, as Robertson affirms, within its much smaller UK circulation it too gained enormous prestige. Their photographers underwent a tough and demanding apprenticeship, learning by doing and honing their craft of making strongly narrative photo-essays on a diverse range of social and political topics of the time under encouraging and sometimes ruthless editorial control. A distinction grew between 'news' photography of the daily newspapers and 'photojournalism' ('reportage' in France) of the weekly magazines. News was immediate, of the day. Photojournalism on the other hand, was more considered, produced over an extended period of time. The emphasis was on narrative, and with telling a story (Loengard 1998: *Life Photographers: What They Saw* ⁹⁸. Robertson 1989 *ibid*).

⁹⁶ Shore, S 2004: *Uncommon Places: the Complete Collection*. London. Thames & Hudson.

⁹⁷ In England the first BBC radio broadcast was in 1922, and the first television broadcast in 1936.

⁹⁸ Loengard, J 1998: *Life Photographers: What They Saw*. Boston, New York, London. Bulfinch Press. Little, Brown and Co.

Within the social sciences, the development towards a mature form of documentary photography during the 1930's and 1940's was paralleled in England within the anthropology inspired work of the Mass Observation Unit. This was a research group led by the Malinowski trained anthropologist, Tom Harrison, set up in 1937 in the aftermath of the abdication of Edward VII, with the aim of studying working class life in England (Hubble 2006: *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*.⁹⁹ Madge & Jennings 1937: *May the Twelfth*...¹⁰⁰ Spender 1982: *Worktown People*.¹⁰¹)

In America the development in journalism flowed through not only the news magazines such as 'Life' and its imitators but also as a result of Government policy and the sociologically directed political work of the Roosevelt Government "New Deal" Farm Security Agency, and photographers such as Lange, Evans, Lee, Walcott & Mydans. Working under the tutelage of the agency's Director, Roy Stryker, the agency photographers were given lessons in sociology, and charged with documenting in a sociological manner the effects that agricultural economic depression was having on people and their communities in the mid-West farming states, and the success, or otherwise, of Government measures to combat rural poverty there (Brown, R.G 2005(a): *Michael Lesy, a Photographic Portrait of America 1935-43*).¹⁰² (See below). Following WWII, and boosted by the formation of the Magnum co-operative photo-agency owned by its members in 1947 and their enthusiasms, the tradition reached a level of mature confidence and expression in the 1950's and '60's. A confidence that was marked in 1955 by the *Family of Man* (Steichen 1955 *ibid*) and in 1967 by *The Concerned Photographer* exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Capa 1967/1972 *ibid*). A maturity of expression that continued to influence professional journalism, popular amateur idioms, and the social science disciplines of anthropology and sociology through the same period, and continues to reverberate today although savagely criticised by theorists in the 1970s and 1980s.

Framing and the Decisive Moment.

New technologies in turn brought new picture making possibilities. The lightweight German Leica camera and its imitators from the 1920s, and later the Japanese 35mm single lens reflex cameras inaugurated by the introduction of the Nikon 'F' in 1959, became the cameras of choice for photojournalists and offered new freedoms in the making of pictures. Both systems offered accurate viewfinders which enabled the photographer to carefully frame and compose and expose their picture in camera, expressed by Cartier-Bresson as "The Decisive Moment", safe in the knowledge that what

⁹⁹ Hubble, N 2006: *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*. Houndsmill-Basingstoke. Palgrave MacMillan.

¹⁰⁰ Madge, C & Jennings, H 1937: *May the Twelfth: Mass Observation Surveys 1937 by over two hundred observers*. London. Faber & Faber.

¹⁰¹ Spender, H 1982: *Worktown People: Photographs from Northern England 1937-38*. (ed) J. Mulford. Bristol. Falling Wall Press.

¹⁰² Brown R.G 2005 (a): "Michael Lesy, a photographic portrait of America 1935-43". Visual Studies 20:1. Taylor & Francis.

could be seen in the viewfinder would record on the film. "...To me photography is the simultaneous recognition in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which gave that event its proper expression..." wrote Cartier-Bresson (Cartier-Bresson 1952: *The Decisive Moment*).¹⁰³ Later in conversation he expanded on his thought.¹⁰⁴ "...Photography..." he said, "...is not like painting. There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression, that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative..." (Cartier-Bresson 1957: *The Washington Post*)

Thus there arose amongst documentarians a fetish for the picture frame and for carefully composing the photograph in the camera within that frame (rather than later in the darkroom whilst printing the negative); and for publishing the full frame image in the magazines with a black line border, uncropped by a page layout designer. The thinking was that only then would the full intentions of the photographer be visible. This was important, not a mere whimsy. In the first place it was an attempt to secure the integrity of the image, and the integrity of the photographer making it. They worked with a philosophy of truth to their subjects, and truth to their materials. The picture frame effectively constructs reality for the viewer. The frame works symbolically to structure the social world depicted in ways that are meaningful to both the photographer and the viewer. Framing principles are socially shared, even if not always consciously recognised by the viewer. The conscious use of the frame focuses attention on particular forms or aspects of events being depicted. In doing so they include some things and cut out from view other things and so construct a visualisation of reality. That visualisation is meaningful and can persist over time. Its lingering can affect later judgements and influence opinions and how individuals interpret events in various ways. The matter is raised as an aesthetic consideration by John Szarkowski (Szarkowski 1965/2007: *The Photographer's Eye*),¹⁰⁵ and discussed at length by Michael J. Carter (Carter 2013: *The Hermeneutics of Frame and Framing*).¹⁰⁶

The black border served to show that the photograph was not later interfered with or cropped, but was authentic and reproduced exactly in accordance with the photographer's intentions, thus securing the authority of the photograph. Secondly, always in the back of the photographer's mind is the story, and pictures would be made with a sense of that narrative of sequenced images. Each picture, ideally, would be carefully considered in relation to it-self and in relation to the whole story. True, this is not always possible in the

¹⁰³ Cartier-Bresson, H 1952: *The Decisive Moment*. New York. Simon & Schuster.

¹⁰⁴ The notion originates in the memoirs of the C17th Cardinal de Retz, 1613-1679, who wrote "...There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment..."

¹⁰⁵ Szarkowski J 1965: *The Photographer's Eye*. reprinted 2007. New York. The Museum of Modern Art.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, Michael, J 2013: *The Hermeneutics of Frame and Framing: An Examination of the Media's Construction of Reality*. Sage Open. Sage Publications on-line.

field and with following the speed of passing events. It could well be an editorial decision made later in the darkroom selecting from contact sheets which negative to print, and afterwards with prints laid out along a wall or along the floor to see the whole and establish the best sequence in order to say what needs to be said. Nonetheless the care with framing and composition of each picture mattered and was paramount for most photographers.

Legacy.

The tradition of a compassionate documentary photography bearing witness to the world continues to flourish and evolve in the popular spheres of journalism and reportage, and in the academic world as qualitative visual anthropology and visual sociology (Light 2000),¹⁰⁷ (Lardinois 2009),¹⁰⁸ (Banks & Ruby 2011).¹⁰⁹ In the case of visual sociology especially as a viable research methodology through the work of a small group of sociologist-photographers that emerged in the so-called 'second' Chicago School of Sociologists who flourished through the teachings of Becker and the work of his pupils such as Harper and Suchar and the International Visual Sociology Association. Work whose impetus and sociological style was grounded, initially, in the work of a former FSA staff photographer, John Collier.¹¹⁰

Mass circulation magazines such as 'Life' have steadily declined, losing their readership, revenues and authority. 'Picture Post' ceased publication as early as 1957 with declining sales and revenues. 'Life' ceased publication in 1972, and stumbled along with monthly and 'special' issues until 2000. But its power and prestige had gone, and with it went one of the most influential forcing houses in which photographers could learn their craft, hone their skills in searching for, constructing and telling stories about the human condition in the knowledge they also had a ready audience (Loengard 1998 *ibid*). A new generation of photographers began to deliberately use Colour negative film stock, partly to distance the new work from the 'old fashioned style of black and white photography', and partly to establish a documentary 'style' of their own. The poor colour reproduction was now seen as a strength.

Their place is taken increasingly by on-line websites such as Life Force Magazine (<www.lifeforcemagazine.com>).

¹⁰⁷ Light, K (ed) 2000: *Witness in our time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers*. Washington & New York. Smithsonian Books.

¹⁰⁸ Lardinois, B (Ed), 2009: *Magnum Magnum*. London. Thames & Hudson.

¹⁰⁹ Banks, M & Ruby, J 2011: *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*. Chicago and London. Chicago University Press.

¹¹⁰ Collier, J Jnr & Collier, M 1968: *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (rev. ed 2008). Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press.

From hermeneutics to social documentary photography.

My wager in bringing social documentary photography into dialogue with Ricoeur's hermeneutics is that the affinity between them that I find there will help resolve the subject : object dilemma, and do so in ways that show us that the discourses of the visual and of spoken and especially written language are complementary aspects of our need to give meaning and understanding to human life. That the word can bring the visual to life with added subtleties of depth and meaning as, conversely, the visual can bring the dry word on the page to vivid and recognisable life adding depth and meaning, each can exist independently yet each gain added power when taken together, is a familiar, even old idea. Yet it has somehow become disjointed, even opposed in recent thinking, particularly in certain areas of philosophy where the 'ocular' is regarded with suspicion, as Jay has laid out (Jay 1993: *Downcast Eyes*).¹¹¹

Examples

In this section I am going to briefly look at some examples of social documentary that I admire, and ask how and where the dialogue with Ricoeur's hermeneutics might be applied to them using Weber's notion of elective affinity. I have no intention of writing in great detail about them but simply to sketch their basic contours and to indicate where Ricoeur's hermeneutics can bring a depth of understanding, and where Weber's notion of an elective affinity can serve as a useful tool of mediation between them. They are: Paul Strand: *Tir a'Mhurain*. James Ravilious: *An English Eye*. The Farm Security Administration of 1930's America. Jorma Puranen: *Imaginary Homecomings*.

A summary of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Text: Key Points.

First I think it would be useful to recap on some points Ricoeur made about hermeneutics and the theory of the text from Chapter 2.

1. Hermeneutics: This is defined as the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts.
2. The key idea to this is: The realisation of Discourse as a text.
3. A written text open language to new and original resources for Discourse. It allows for *semantic innovations* and *multiple meanings* to enter and realise it's own-most possibilities for becoming text
4. Writing allows language a semantic autonomy with a 3-fold structure:
 - a) The Speakers Intentions
 - b) The Cultural & Social Economic circumstances of its production.
 - c) The Reception of its' original audience, and of other audiences later
5. The task of hermeneutics is now 2-fold:

¹¹¹ Jay, M 1993: *Downcast Eyes: the denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

- i) To examine the internal dynamic of the structure of the text.
 - ii) To examine the power of the work to project itself outside of itself.
6. To create an accessible and intelligible World of it's own: A World of the Text.
 7. The World of the Text is "truly" the thing referred to by the text.
 8. Discourse: This is defined as the act of someone saying something about something to someone.
 9. Discourse implies the recognition of another speaker. This raises the problem of inter-subjectivity and communication.
 10. Discourse creates a distinction between Sense and Reference. Discourse is opened to the World, it says something about the World.
 11. Saying something about the world demonstrates the Intentionality of Saying. It is an act of Affirmation.
 12. Discourse involves 3 'moments of interpretation in the explanation and understanding of the narrative of texts.

Figuration - Configuration - Refiguration

13. Discourse articulates 3 events:

A Locutor - a subject of discourse.

Illocution - an act of discourse, involving a meta-linguistic code, perlocution and extra-linguistic references.

An Interlocutor: the ultimate destination of discourse - a reader.

14. Interpretation is the endless subtle dialectic between explanation and understanding along a unique hermeneutic arc.
15. A hermeneutics of the text extends interpretation to all phenomena and inscription having a readable, textual nature.
16. Hermeneutics transcends disciplinary boundaries. Operating as a general theory hermeneutics mediates between disciplines.
17. The notion of the text is a means-end rationality:
 - Text implies Discourse.
 - Text is language inscribed and rendered permanent, thus becoming bound in history.
 - Text goes beyond the inscription of speech.
18. Text generates new semantic innovations and a semantic micro-universe.
19. Writing generates a new instrument of thinking.
- 20 Writing calls for Reading.
21. The World of the Text creates a double eclipse of the Author and the Reader.
22. This eclipse generates Ambiguity:
 - between the author's intentions.
 - Between different readers reception and understandings.
23. Written text implies matters of *Texture; Voice; Composition; Mood*.

24. Text provokes a new conception of Cause. Cause is now a matter of Intention and Motivation synonymous with the initiative of an agent.

This is a long list. It could be further extended in detail. In summary Ricoeur states that hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of language and meaning. There can be no meaning if any social analysis is not anchored in the subject located in time and history.

1. The Farm Security Administration 1935-1944.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States in 1933, representing the Democratic Party. The country was suffering a severe economic depression that extended worldwide. In 1933 25% of the workforce were unemployed; Agricultural prices had dropped by 60%; Industrial production was down by 50%; 2 million people were homeless, and 48 Federal States had closed their banks. The Roosevelt government instituted a programme of projects designed to bring economic relief to people, generate economic recovery for the nation, and reform the banks and financial institutions held



*Fig 3.2: Dorothea Lange.
13 year old farm boy.
Alabama 1936*

culpable for the country's economic depression. The programme gained the name The New Deal. One programme was called the Resettlement Administration with a subsection called the Historical Section of the Information Division. In 1937 the programme was renamed the Farm Security Administration, (the FSA). The head of the programme was an economist Roy E. Stryker. He inaugurated a photography project on behalf of the Government to report and document the conditions of poor farmers in the Great Plains region of America, centring on Oklahoma, the Texas panhandle, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. Here a combination of light soils, high winds, little rainfall resulted in a lack of grass to root the soil. In consequence the winds stripped away the fertile top soil, earning the region the nickname 'The Dust Bowl' and the farmers crops failed. The Government needed the support of urban populations to provide the funds for programmes of financial and other aid to bring relief to the tenant cotton farmers and migrant farm

workers. Stryker initially hired eleven photographers to go to the affected States and photograph the people and conditions they were enduring.

Stryker and the FSA have been extensively recorded, discussed and written about, from a spectrum of perspectives ranging from the supportive to the brutally critical. I have no intention of entering these debates but have published a review article that touches upon them (Brown, R.G 2005(a): *Long Time Coming*).¹¹²

Stryker ensured the photographers were well briefed before going, encouraging them to acquire some knowledge of the sociology of the day, providing them with shooting scripts of suggested things, topics and themes to photograph, and were well financed. In selecting the photographers Stryker is quoted as saying that he sought "...those who possessed an insatiable curiosity, the kind that can get to the core of an assignment...who can comprehend what a truck driver, or a farmer, or a driller, or a housewife thinks and feels, and translate those thoughts and feelings into pictures that can be comprehended by anyone..." (Doud 1963-1965: *Oral History Interview with Roy Emerson Stryker 1963-1965*).¹¹³

Stott has written eloquently upon the work of the FSA and the role Franklin Roosevelt played in the direction it took when formed and the photographers were set to work. Roosevelt was endlessly inquisitive for information about the state of America and the conditions of the population. It was in part a human concern, in part political caution, and in part boastful about being more closely in touch with public opinion than others (Stott *ibid* p94). Stott writes that the documentary approach was characteristic of thirties America, and Roosevelt possessed a documentary imagination. He wanted information "in human terms", not in vast academic economic schemas. His 'economic man' was a flesh and blood individual farmer suffering. He broadcast frequently on the radio and his listeners felt that somehow he was talking personally to them, not from a remote Government office. His 'Fireside Chats' were addressed in the concrete, in plain language that made things "clear as crystal". He made the great national issues localised to those of a small town. To get his point across Roosevelt would use a story, a personal anecdote, inhabited by people that might have been real or might have been imaginary, but felt real nonetheless. Stott writes, "To Roosevelt, people appear to have counted more than ideas" (p95-97 *ibid*).

This ethos infected the work of the FSA photographers. Stryker instructed them to use the camera as a tool to document society, to give the abstractions of economic stress and political policy a human face. Stryker, it is said, taught that "a picture could be beautiful and still possess a social conscience".

¹¹² Brown R.G 2005 (a): "*Long time coming: a photographic portrait of America 1935-43*" Michael Lesy. Visual Studies 20:1. Taylor & Francis.

¹¹³ Doud, R 1963-1965: *Oral History Interview with Roy Emerson Stryker 1963-1965*. Archives of American Art. Smithsonian Institute. Accessible at <www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-roy-emerson-stryker-12480/>.



*Fig 3.3: Walker Evans, Bud Field and family
Tenant cotton sharecroppers.
Alabama 1936.*

When asked how he judged the photographs returned he replied, "...we never evaluated them in terms of set values (i.e 'rules of composition'). We looked at them in terms of what did they have to say about this little group of people, this particular village, this particular dust area...I think they (i.e. the photographers) were intelligent people reporting things they felt and saw, based upon past experience, based upon a good deal of investigation. And, above all else, particularly as regards the human side of things, a sincere...respect for people...at no time did we have rules or criteria..." (Doud *ibid*).

The photographers provided those for themselves, especially Walker Evans. The FSA had an obviously political agenda, to promote, win and maintain support for the New Deal programmes. The photographs were distributed widely to the media of the time free of charge. Photographers are people too with opinions, and although the photography overall was well intentioned, Walker Evans, and his collaborator James Agee, anguished over the morality of their work nonetheless. They were troubled at "spying" on the tenants; Agee wrote "...by what right, and for what purpose, and to what good end, or none..." they were witnesses and communicators of the lives of, "...an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings..." (Agee & Evans 1941: *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.¹¹⁴ Quoted in Stott, *ibid*, p272). He worried too at the right of his audience to view Evans photographs and to read his words, "...by what right do you qualify to..."

¹¹⁴ Agee, J & Evans, W 1941: *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Text by James Agee, Photographs by Walker Evans. Boston, Mass. Houghton Mifflin.

(*ibid*). Other photographers in the group were perhaps less anguished but alive nonetheless to the tangle of political and moral issues that enveloped their work.

The FSA project is interesting on many counts and has been immensely influential in the evolution of the thought and practice of social documentary photography. In the terms we are considering it here in this thesis there is a clear value in making use of Weber's concept of elective affinity in mediating between the ideology of the Roosevelt New Deal programmes, on one side, and the practical interests of people on the other. Not only the farmers depicted but also for the photographers, because one agenda of the programme was to generate employment, and the photographers found paid employment working for the agency. In fact there is a double layer of mediation (at the least) with the attitude of Roosevelt himself towards the people affected by the New Deal programmes. Others most certainly took a different political view.

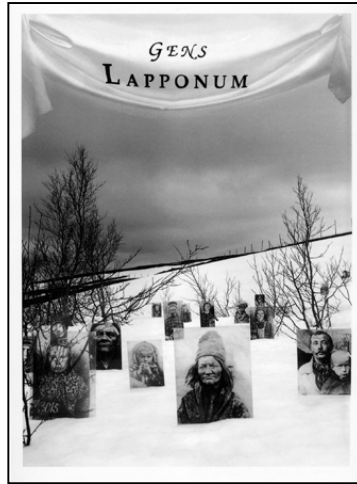
Hermeneutics.

In terms of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, standing back and seeing things as wholes, first, we can clearly see the New Deal programme and the FSA response to it, taken as whole body of work, 'ticks' all the boxes I have enumerated above.

Points 1-5: The photography as a whole we can regard as a Text, informed through the theory and practice of Action, and the theory and practice of History. The hermeneutics operates as understanding in relation to their text. The photography is realised as Discourse. That discourse opened new and original resources for multiple levels of meaning and semantic innovations in the photography. The discourse has a clear 3-fold structure of Intention, notice of the cultural and economic circumstances of its production, and the reception to it of the original audiences. By breaking the whole photography programme into parts that equate to each individual photographer, we can examine the internal structures of the whole photographic Text, and those of the parts. We can clearly examine the power of the work, in parts and whole, to project itself outside of itself.

Points 6-24: The photographic text creates an intelligible World of the Text. The Discourse is an act of Affirmation that demonstrates the intentionality of saying. The discourse involves moments of Figuration : Configuration : Refiguration and those of Locutor : Illocution : Interlocutor. Interpretation is open ended, a subtle and endless dialectic between Explanation and Understanding. The text transcends disciplinary boundaries in which the content is rendered permanent and bound into history. The photographic text generates a new instrument of thinking (and often fraught debate!). The photographic text generates Ambiguity between authorial intention and reader reception. The photography 'speaks' with many varieties of texture, mood and voice. Finally the text clearly redefines cause with motivation.

2. Jorma Puranen: *Imaginary Homecoming*.



*Fig 3.4 Jorma Puranen
Imaginary Homecoming 1999.*

Puranen is a Finnish photographer. North Finland gives way to Lapland. In that arctic and sub-arctic region live a people called the Sami. Historically they are nomadic reindeer herders who follow their herds as the seasons progress. National boundaries are a nuisance to such a population creating awkward barriers to their passage. Because of their remoteness and their style of life the Sami have, in the recent past, been thought ‘backward’ even ‘primitive’ by people living further south in settled rural and urban communities. The Sami have a close physical and spiritual allegiance to their lands. Puranen set out to photograph them and find a way in which to represent their material and spiritual culture.

In 1884 a French ethnographic expedition, under Prince Roland Bonaparte, went to Lapland and took with them a photographer, G. Roche. Roche photographed the Sami producing many portraits using the glass plates and the wet collodion process of the time. In total he produced some 250 portraits and 400 negatives. They are collected and stored at the Musée de l’Homme, Paris. Copious notes were kept that included the names of the people in the pictures. Puranen first saw the photographs in 1988 visiting a friend in Finnish Lapland, who told him about the French archive. “It was obvious to me that these exceptionally beautiful pictures were taken by a skilled portraitist” sates Puranen. He felt he wanted to make something of them. He has done so in a unique way by reproducing the original images, developing them on graphic film, and mounting onto clear acrylic boards. The resulting project he called *Imaginary Homecoming* because the present in the geographic location of the fells in the province of Finnmarken in Norway, was juxtaposed with the year 1884 and a museum in Paris.

The project, Puranen writes, is an attempt to create a dialogue between the past and the present, between two historical moments and two landscapes, and between two different cultures. Thus the project is also about spatial and temporal distance, and about ethnographic identity.

To mediate the historical and geographic distance Puranen attempted to metaphorically return the original photograph back to the place of their original making. This he did so by reprinting them as described. Working in the years between 1991 and 1997 Puranen took the mounted reprints back into their original landscape and inserted them into the snowy ground. The physical landscape became for him also a mental landscape. Many of the pictures have been reconstructed in the northern heights of Ruija, a barren region of the province of Finnmarken. For centuries the fells have been the migration routes of the reindeer herding Sami. Whilst it proved not possible to revisit all the original sites those he did provided him with a symbol of homecoming. The fells chosen ranged through northern Sweden and northern Norway.

Puranen writes that for him there is no absolute landscape but a site onto which we project different ideas, fantasies and perspectives. Thus he likens the landscape to a theatre and a stage, creating in the process an division between the outer stage and inner stage of the viewer's mind and perceptions. *Imaginary Homecoming* suggest, he says, a counter-memory: an alternative way of looking at the landscape and pondering upon things past and those present.



*Fig 3.5 Jorma Puranen
Imaginary Homecoming 1999.*

The northern landscape has changed since the original photographs were taken, and the project also questions that. The Sami themselves continue but much reduced with only

about 2,800 people, some 10% of the total population, still living full time in their traditional ways (Puranen 1999: *Faces From the Past*).¹¹⁵

3. Paul Strand: *Tir a'Mhurain*



Fig 3.5 Paul Strand *Tir a'Mhurain* 1954

During the 1950s and 1960s Paul Strand produced a series of books in collaboration with accomplished writers on a number of different countries: France, Italy, Egypt and Scotland, the Outer Hebrides. The book he made in collaboration with the historian of African cultures, Basil Davidson, about the Outer Hebrides, *Tir a'Mhurain* - the Land of Bent Grass, is in my opinion one of his finest.

Strand and his wife Helen lived on the Outer Hebridean island of South Uist for three months in 1954.

The first three weeks or so they spent wandering across Uist and its neighbour, Eriksay. He felt he wanted to get to know the place and the people much better than he did before beginning to make his photographs. "It is through the factual world that we express life" Strand said in 1946. The camera he felt gives us access to things as they are, and with a trust for the medium and respect for its intrinsic properties, express both things to be said about the subject, and express "the artist's sense of life". Strand accepted the modernist doctrine about 'straight' photography. That by its nature photography allows the world to show or utter itself directly to the viewer. His is a photography of as pure a phenomenology as can be imagined. Strand is quoted as saying that "...I have aesthetic means at my disposal, which are necessary to me to be able to say what I want to say about the things I see. And the thing I see is outside of myself - always. I'm not trying to describe an inner state of being..." (Trachtenberg 1990: *Paul Strand: Essays on his life and work*).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Puranen, J 1999: *Faces from the Past: Imaginary Homecoming*. Accessed at <www.finlit.fi/booksfromfinland/bff/199/puranen.htm>.

¹¹⁶ Trachtenberg, A 1990: *Introduction*. In Stange, M (ed) 1990: *Paul Strand: Essays on his Life and Work*. New York. Aperture.

When Davidson asked Strand why he had chosen to go to the Hebrides, he replied that partly because of a BBC radio programme which featured 5 women singers from the island, and because the programme producer spoke “glowingly of his experience there”. But there was another reason and that was because of the remoteness. Here was an ideal subject for him of small places with scattered inhabitants who represented a distinct historical culture as well as themselves (Davidson 1990: *Working with Strand*).¹¹⁷

Davidson and Strand discussed at length what the text of the book should do. In 1957 he wrote him, “So to sum up, here are a fine people born of a rich culture hundreds of years old, tenacious in the face of all hardships, rooted in their island...How can they make this island and their lives part of the world as it develops? Can we not ask the question not only of their culture but of their very existence, if we establish through their history, and their struggles of past and present, the fine basic character of these folk?...” (Davidson *ibid* p216). Given their jointly agreed objectives the great requirement became to see not only the most effective prints, but “what these photographs do to each other”. This attention to the sequencing of the photographs alongside the text of the book was something new to Davidson. Once decided upon the book was put together. However they ran into difficulty with the publisher. Strand wanted high quality photo-gravure printing. That was difficult to find in Europe at the time, but a publisher was eventually found, Kunst Verlag in Dresden and Leipzig, in the then communist state of East Germany. The publisher chose to ignore Davidson’s text and use another by an unknown French writer much to Strand’s anger. He refused. Davidson’s text was integral to the integrity of the completed work. (*ibid* p217-218).

Davidson writes that underpinning Strand’s work is an insistent but pragmatic humanism. The central theme of the book was, Strand suggested, “...the people themselves: their dignity and sturdiness and the tenacity with which they hold on to their barren wind swept isles”. In this he saw they possessed the potentials for a more viable and useful culture in the future. This, suggest Davidson, is the humanism that made it necessary for Strand to wait long weeks before beginning the photography. Once working he would wait again until people became entirely familiar with his presence and the large 10”x8” plate camera that he worked with. His subjects are comfortable to be photographed, there are no snatched pictures. The subjects look you straight in the eye through the lens of the camera. Strand’s viewpoint is respectful, always positioned a fraction lower than a direct eye-to-eye contact. In other words he does not seek to dominate the subject but treat them with respect and dignity as equals.

¹¹⁷ Davidson, B 1990: *Working with Strand*. In Stange, M (ed) *ibid*.

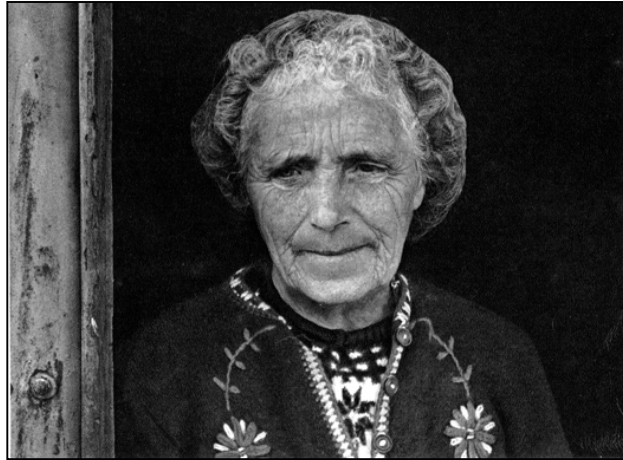


Fig 3.6. Paul Strand: Mrs Marion MacLellan

4. James Ravilious: An English Eye.

Ravilious and his wife moved to the village of Dolton in North Devon in 1972. In the nearby village of Beaford there was an Arts Centre and the then director, John Lane, offered him a commission as artist in residence to further a photography project he had running for the past twelve months. Lane wanted to use “the power of the (photographic) image...as a means of communicating with local people.



Fig 3.7 Farmer Alf Pugsley returning a lamb to its mother. Langham. Dolton. 1982.

Ravilious began to create a photographic archive of the land and people of North Devon that would continue for the next twenty or so years. Lane let Ravilious work out for himself how to develop the commission and the documentary photography. Ravilious worked in close co-operation with the people of the area, visible and involved in their lives, regularly presenting slideshows to the community of the work he was making.

In James Ravilious' I see something different from the other documentaries discussed so far. His work is lyrical, the stuff of the poetry of Edward Thomas, beautiful to look at with a profound sense of the people, land and animals that bound together their lives. They are frequently shot against the light that glows through the misty air, backlighting their subjects, yet with shadows that firmly anchor their subjects into the earth of their land. His are humorous yet gentle and quiet photographs, peaceful with nothing pretentious or bombastic about them, yet carefully framed and constructed.

Over the years of the project Ravilious has produced some 80,000 photographs and an archive of a distinctive way of life in North Devon that is rare because made over so long a period of time, with so close an involvement and understanding of the people, their lives, land, village communities and rural ceremonies. There is, as Hamilton says in his thoughtful and closely observed text, some quality about the photography that is "quintessentially English". Perhaps that is why I like them so much!



Fig 3.8 Pigs dozing. Parsonage Farm. Iddesleigh. Devon. 1976.

Summary.

In these four examples of different types of social documentary photography all can be found to have a close affinity to Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In the case of the FSA photographs I have pointed this out in some detail, but the same could be said for Puranen's, Strand's and especially James Ravilious' work. That I haven't done so is simply to avoid needless repetition. All create understanding through the discourse of the world they create and represent. All open that discourse to new ways of seeing and new ways of saying that are meaningful, literate, and intelligible, in forms that are permanent. In short, all four achieve the hermeneutic purpose of understanding more and understanding more richly through: *the act of someone saying something about something to someone.*

Chapter 4

Photographing fieldwork:

Case Studies

Introduction.

I have produced two documentary case studies using digital photography for this thesis. They form a continuum of practice in a unity of description and aesthetics. Both are concerned with questions of historical identity in a continuum of practice running from visual ethnography to forensic science, archaeology and anthropology. The photography follows a continuum of descriptive document and expressive aesthetics that unifies both in different proportions to suit the intentions and purpose of their making. Both Case Studies are the result of commissioned work.

The Case Studies are presented as hard back books together with the written thesis in the complete PhD submission.. A PDF file of each can be found in the Appendix.

The original studies are in colour.

Case Study 1: *Regeneration Waterside South*. This is a study in the visual ethnography of a sub-district of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire. The subject is a residential and industrial district undergoing social and economic regeneration.

Case Study 2: *Imperium1326: The Death of a Tyrant? Hulton Abbey and an archaeological mystery*. This is a study in Forensic science, Archaeology and Anthropology. The subject is a male skeleton excavated from Hulton Abbey, North Staffordshire that bears the marks of the male individual being executed by hanging, drawing and quartering. The skeleton is believed to be unique in the archaeological record of the United Kingdom.

Case Study 1: *Regeneration: Waterside South.*

This is a study in the practice of applied ethnographic, digital, documentary photography. The photographs are of the people, their sense of identity and community and their built environment in a suburban district of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent named Wellington in Victorian Times, and Waterside South today. The photography results from a commission awarded me by the Arts Council West Midlands and RENEW North Staffordshire for a community arts project they called, 'Place, Space & Identity 1'. The purpose was to document the people, district and the work being done there by the housing development agency, RENEW. The principle documentary photography was made in the autumn and winter months of 2007-2008.¹



Fig 4:1 New Waterside housing alongside the Caldon Canal.

The people and the district are undergoing radical social, cultural and economic change as a result of Government policy. The 2003 Labour Government designated the district part of a larger Pathfinder Housing Market Renewal Programme (HMR) economic and development zone. A new agency, RENEW North Staffordshire was formed from within Stoke City Council in 2005, to administer the scheme as a partnership between the local authorities, public and private sector stakeholders prepared to invest financially in the development and regeneration of the zone. Development finance is sourced from the European Union, central Government, local authorities and from the private sector.² Waterside South and East is part of a larger re-development project called City Centre South, described by the RENEW agency as 'The 'Jewel in the Crown' of their regeneration projects. The overall project is centred on Hanley and spreads over a wider geographic area, embracing parts of the Borough of Newcastle-u-Lyme to the west, and parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands to the east and Hanley to the north.

Outcomes.

The work has been publicly exhibited under the original title, '*Waterside South*', March-May 2008 in the Dresden Street Community Centre, and in St Luke's Church Hall, Wellington, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

¹ I accepted the commission on the understanding that the work would also form a case study for this thesis. Both the Arts Council and RENEW are agreeable to this.

² The Agency website is: <www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk>.

When the exhibition closed I donated the prints displayed to the Community Centre Resident's Association as an historical record for them of the people and place as I documented it, to use as they wished. The work has been published as Brown, R.G 2008: *Waterside South* in Locke and Henner (eds) 2008: *The Art of Beauty and the Earth*.³ I featured the work in a conference paper in 2009 to the annual conference of the International Visual Sociology Association (Brown, R.G 2009 (b): "*Photography, ongoing moments and the active presence of absent things*").⁴



Fig 4.2:
Eagle Street
under
demolition.

Waterside South & East is a district of some 67 hectares of land, roughly triangular in shape, lying on southward sloping ground to the south-east of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. It is an area of residential housing and industry. To the south the boundary for Waterside South lies along the length of the Caldon Canal, to the west by Lichfield Street. The slightly larger zone called South & East is bounded and to the east and north by Leek Road and Bucknall New Road. The Ordinance Survey map for 1890 shows few houses. The area was then almost wholly industrial with brick works and brick fields, coal mining, with a major company, the Eagle Pottery at a spot called Ivy House, Meakins pottery and other tile making works, and an important paper mill, Brittain's, set along the canal side. The housing was largely built after 1890 to 1914, for the expanding workforce serving these industries.

They were constructed by a mixture of the industrial company's themselves and speculative private developers. As many as four generations of the same families have since been born and lived in many of the houses, some continuously in the same property. Many families saw their children and grandchildren continue to live in the district nearby, going to the same schools, attending the same churches, shopping in the same shops, going to war, some to return, and building their lives there. This continuity of history and

³ Locke, E & Henner, M (eds) 2008: *The Art of Beauty and the Earth*. Newcastle-u-Lyme. BAarts Publishing.

⁴ Brown, R.G 2009 (b): "*Photography, ongoing moments and the active presence of absent things*" International Visual Sociology Association Annual Conference. University of Cumbria, Carlisle, UK.

memory gives the district a distinctive feel and appeal to the residents that they closely identify with.

The housing was built in terraces typical of the period along roads running roughly north-south down the slope of the land. An east-west road, Waterloo Road, ran along the centre forming a spine with terraces radiating south and north on either side, with another cross route, Seymour Street at the northern end and another cross route, Commercial Road running across the southern boundary parallel to the canal. Corner shops and pubs were built at the road junctions with Waterloo Road. One shop remained unique at the time of the photography. This is 'The Hole-in-the-wall' oatcake shop selling traditional Staffordshire oatcakes from a downstairs kitchen through what would normally be the front window of a domestic house to customers in the street outside. It was the last of its kind in Stoke-on-Trent and came to symbolise the frustrations and anger of many residents who became increasingly upset to find their homes declared unfit for purpose and, what seemed to them, the high-handed attitude of the RENEW Agency, including petitions to Westminster and the Prime Minister, then Gordon Brown. Scheduled by the agency for demolition The Hole-in-the-Wall finally closed in March 2011.



Fig 4.3: Mrs Lottie Hughes, 88 years, third generation resident of Eagle Street.

All the terraces are built to a similar ground plan with two downstairs rooms plus a rear scullery and two or three bedrooms upstairs. They front directly onto their roads with a minimal garden space or none at all at the front, and at the rear they all have small backyards that were built originally with an outside toilet. Indoor bathrooms were added much later with first floor extensions over the scullery. The rear yards give access to alleyways that lace the lengths of the terraces. The house fronts are in a variety of decorative architectural styles, with some having plain fronts and others varieties of canopied bay windows.

In the twentieth century a small number of higher status semi-detached houses were built near to the Eagle pottery and Brittain's paper mill, their door and window surrounds decorated in the fashionable Egyptian 'Odeon' style, perhaps to appeal more to a salaried managerial class working in the mill and potbanks. During WWII the area suffered some bomb damage. Where the older houses were demolished new housing replaced them built, typically, in a 1950's style of functional terraces and semi-detached properties. A number of tower blocks of flats were built close to Hanley in the 1960's. With the decline of the Stoke-on-Trent coal mining, steel making and pottery industries the character of the area has also changed. People have moved away, new people have moved in to houses on short-term rentals, and there is a sizeable population of temporary immigrant asylum seekers awaiting Home Office permission to residency.

RENEW North Staffordshire was charged with the responsibility for carrying out the Labour Government Housing Market Renewal Programme (HMR) by instigating and overseeing large scale new housing projects and urban environmental improvements. The RENEW Pathfinder partnership was given the Aim:

"To ensure that all the essential requirements of sustainable communities are addressed, especially good quality, customer focused public services and a pride in the Community and cohesion within it."

To achieve this the Agency was set 6 Objectives:

- 1) To retain and attract population.
- 2) To balance the supply and demand for housing.
- 3) To transform the urban form and local environment.
- 4) To facilitate housing choice and the provision of quality housing stock.
- 5) To promote social cohesion and social mobility.
- 6) To achieve sustainable communities.

(Audit Commission Performance Review 2009 RENEW North Staffordshire, March 2010).⁵

Ten Pathfinder status geographic zones were established across England and Wales by the Labour Government in areas of perceived greatest need. The zones cut across local authority boundaries, the idea being to remove Pathfinder projects away from local authority planning priorities and restrictions and vesting them in an agency with greater powers. RENEW management envisaged a ten to fifteen year period in which to plan, implement and achieve their HMR aims and objectives. The Agency actively promoted community involvement in their planning with the establishment of resident's

⁵ The Audit Commission 2010: *HMR Performance Review 2009: RENEW North Staffordshire. March 2010*. Available On-line:
<www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk/assets/resource_library/hmrperformancereview2009renew1/http>.

associations, the financing of community centres and varieties of social activities throughout the year, building on what was already *in situ* or beginning from scratch.

The Case Study photography commission from the Arts Council West Midlands/RENEW can be seen to fall within objectives 1,5 & 6.

RENEW wished to demolish substantial parts of the area and rebuild with new modern housing. They argued that most of the housing in the Waterside South development area is too old, suffers from mining and geological subsidence in places, and no longer the type of housing 'young professional people' today wish to buy. The sub-text is an anxiety to improve the economic skills base within North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent by retaining and attracting in an educated and qualified young generation of people with attractive new housing, schools and urban environmental improvements.

The latest Audit Commission Review shows that in the five year period 2003-2008 the RENEW Pathfinder partnership received £97.10 million in HMR Government funding. In the period 2008-2009 about £84.5 million of aligned private sector investment was made within the total City Centre Pathfinder Zone. A further £45.5 million private sector funding, £40.0 million from RENEW and other local authorities, and a further £18.0 million private sector funding directly into HMR projects was invested. The projected spend for 2009-10 was estimated at some £38.0 million, and for 2010-2011 the projected spend was estimated at £36.0 million.

In 2004 RENEW pledged to demolish some 14,000 old housing stock considered unfit or beyond refurbishment to modern standards. By 2024 the Agency planned to have built 12,000 new homes and apartments across the City Centre zone. It planned to refurbish a further 10,000 private properties and 20,000 council or housing association properties. In the five year period 2005-2010 RENEW spent some £98.0 million buying 1,661 houses, and some £120.0 million overall buying homes and business sites across the whole Pathfinder development zone.



Fig 4.4 (left) & Fig 4.5 (right): Mr & Mrs John Tatton with their first marital home behind them in Tintern Street. Brittain's paper mill where they both worked is the factory building in the background, 2007. Mrs Tatton was born and raised in a house by her left shoulder visible in Fig 13. The house was demolished as unfit in 2008.

Within the Waterside South/City Waterside development that this photography focused upon, RENEW acquired 902 houses of which 700 have been demolished. More than 2,500 new homes were planned for the area. As of December 2012 only some 400 have been built so far, and 650 existing homes have been re-furbished. Streets within the Waterside South development where homes have been demolished include Waterloo Street, Balfour Street, Wellington Road, Dresden Street, Lincoln Street, Ludlow Street, Tintern Street and Bucknall New Road. Some £2.5 million has been spent improving older properties and a new Waterside Primary School has been built.

In 2010 the new Conservative/Liberal-Democrat coalition Government decided to withdraw Pathfinder HMR development funding. The RENEW North Staffordshire HMR Pathfinder partnership ceased to exist. The task of housing and economic redevelopment has been absorbed back into Stoke City Council and other local authorities.

Case Study 2: Imperium 1326: The Death of a Tyrant. Hulton Abbey and an archaeological mystery.

This is a study in the practice of applied scientific forensic, digital, documentary photography. The photographs are of a medieval male skeleton, labelled HA16, whose skeletal osteology shows abundant evidence of severe peri-mortem trauma typically associated with the individual having been executed by being drawn, hanged, emasculated, eviscerated, beheaded and quartered. A form of State execution imposed for crimes of high treason and tyranny in medieval England. The skeleton was first discovered during excavations of the site of Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire, during archaeological excavations in the period 1972-1983 (Klemperer & Boothroyd 2004: *Excavations at Hulton Abbey 1987-1994*).⁶

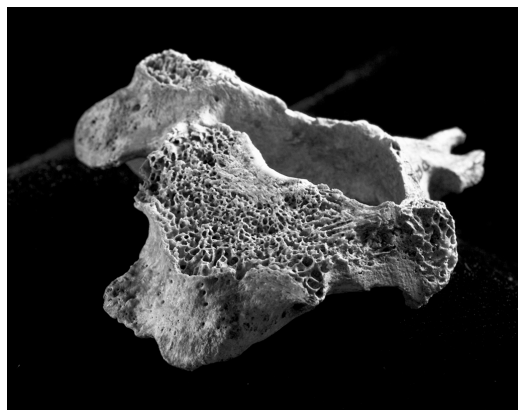


Fig 4.6. Skeleton HA 16, Cervical verterba C3 showing evidence of beheading.

The photographs are the product of an inter-disciplinary, team based, research project in forensic led by Professor J.P.Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, Staffordshire

⁶ Klemperer, W.D & Boothroyd, N 2004: *Excavations at Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire, 1987-1994*. Leeds. The Society for Medieval Archaeology. Monograph 21. Maney Publishing.

University, UK.⁷ The research project is called: *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project* and has been funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Physical Sciences Centre, and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Distributed e-Learning (DeL) Programme II. I am the team member responsible for the digital photography and protocols.

My task has been to devise methods and procedures to light and photograph the skeleton parts using digital technologies. The requirement is for photographs that describe with great clarity and in macroscopic detail the pathologies of traumatic wounding carried by the bones. The photographs could then be archived and translated into an inter-active teaching and learning DVD for use by others. This I achieved by using an aesthetic of advertising standards of contre-jour lighting with careful attention to the quality of the light and the contrast range between highlights and shadows. The photographs were made using a dedicated macro-photography lens, in high resolution RAW format and daylight balanced colour at 5,500⁰K. So successful was this that the forensic archaeologist Dr Mary Lewis with whom I was working, frequently commented that the photographs revealed forensic details hitherto un-noticed.

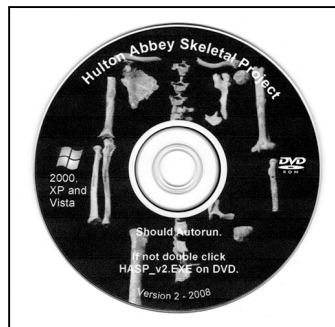


Fig 4.7: The Hulton Abbey Skeletal Digitisation Project inter-active teaching and learning DVD.

The Project recognises that specimens of archaeological bone matter are friable and deteriorate with handling. Educational access to the artefacts is often limited to the institution in which they are held. The Research Project proposes a solution to both problems lies in developing a digitised photographic archive of high quality, high resolution images, and making these available as a teaching and learning aid to a wide variety of audiences via an inter-active DVD. The DVD has been made in multi-platform

⁷ The Project Team are: Professor J.P Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, Staffordshire University; Dr Paul Chin, Physical Sciences Centre, University of Hull; Mr Roger Brown, Senior Lecturer Photography, Faculty of Arts, Media & Design, Staffordshire University; Mr Paul Lucking, Senior Lecturer in Entertainment Technology, Staffordshire University; Dr Mary E. Lewis, Senior Lecturer in Biological Anthropology, Department of Archaeology, University of Reading.

formats and is available on-line free of charge through the HEA/JISC at <www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/home/projects/digitisationproject/> (Fig 4.10).

The skeleton is unique within the archaeological record for the wide spread peri-mortem trauma that it displays. The original forensic examination suggested these were results of blows inflicted by sword, axe and other weapons (Browne, S 1985: *Report on the human bones* in Wise, P 1985: *Hulton Abbey: A Century of Excavations*).⁸ Dr Mary Lewis of Reading University, Department of Archaeology, a Forensic Anthropologist, has re-examined the bones and come to a conclusion that the skeleton shows peri-mortem trauma associated with the form of execution by being drawn, hanged and quartered. Further that the skeleton may, plausibly be the remains of Hugh Despenser the Younger, Chamberlain and favourite courtier to King Edward II (Lewis 2008: *A Traitor's Death? The identity of a drawn, hanged and quartered man from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire*).⁹

A little bit of medieval history: Hugh Despenser the Younger.

Despenser was brother-in-law to Sir Hugh Audley in whose lands Hulton Abbey stood from its foundation in 1223. Despenser was executed in 1326 and his wife, Eleanor de Clare, later petitioned the future king Edward III for the return of his remains, so they may be buried in sanctified ground and his soul escape eternal purgatory. This Edward granted but it is not known for certain where such remains as there were are conclusively buried. Hulton Abbey is a possibility because of the connection through marriage and family (Lewis 2008: *ibid*).

Edward II and Despenser ruled England unopposed in the years 1322-1326 in what the historian Fryde has called a reign of Tyranny (Fryde 2004: *The Tyranny and fall of Edward II, 1321-1326*).¹⁰ It was a period of constitutional crisis in medieval English history. The northern and Welsh baronage challenged the authority of Edward II in 1321-22 over his excessive favouritism of Despenser, and abhorrence of Despenser's own greed and exploitation of his position to seize lands and wealth from them unchecked. In 1322 the Barons under Thomas, Earl of Lancaster went to war against their king, Edward II. Edward defeated them at the Battle of Boroughbridge, near York, in March 1322. Thomas and many other barons were executed for treason, their widows, children and dependents impoverished, even cast out. In 1326 Edward's Queen, Isabella and his son the future Edward III were in Paris. So too was the Welsh Marcher Baron Roger Mortimer of Wigmore who had fought against Edward in 1322 and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Mortimer engineered his escape from the Tower and left England for France.

⁸ Wise, P.J.1985: *Hulton Abbey: a century of excavations*. Staffordshire Archaeological Studies 2. Stoke-on-Trent City Museum.

⁹ Lewis, Mary E 2008: *A Traitor's Death? The identity of a drawn, hanged and quartered man from Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire*. *Antiquity* 82/135 (2008) p113-124.

¹⁰ Fryde, N. 2004: *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II 1321-1326*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

There he formed an alliance with Isabella and together they raised an army of mercenary infantry from the palatinate of Hainault, in modern north Belgium, and in September 1326 invaded England.

Their declared intention was to rid the kingdom of Despenser, and his father also called Hugh. Edward tried and failed to raise an army to oppose them. The Baronage, Clergy and Country turned against him and especially Despenser. Edward, Despenser and a small retinue fled from London to south Wales and Despenser fortress of Caerphilly Castle. The household servants there also turned against them, and Despenser and Edward fled attempting to reach Ireland and safety. They were captured. The king was taken first to Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire. Despenser was taken to Hereford. There in November 1326 he was put on trial for treason, adjudged guilty and executed by being drawn behind four horses through the streets of the city and raised on a fifty foot high gallows where he hung by the neck semi-conscious. A fire was lit at his feet. The Chronicle of Froissart records that a man climbed a ladder beside him, emasculated him and threw his genitals into the fire, eviscerated his stomach and threw his bowels also into the fire. His heart was cut out and burned. The cadaver was lowered onto a table and quartered, the head being sent to London Bridge, the quarters to the four corners of the kingdom.

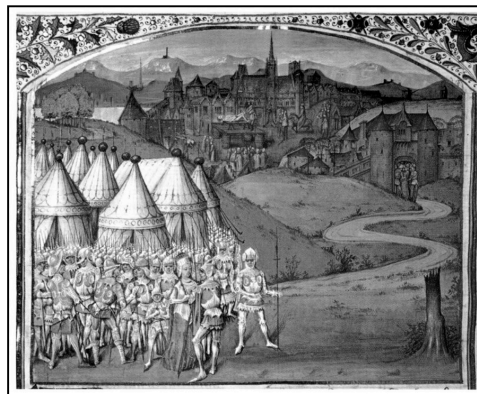


Fig 4.8: Queen Isabella at the gates of Hereford, November 1326. The body of Hugh Despenser can be seen highlighted in the middle distance lying prone on a table being quartered. (The British Museum)

In 1327 Edward II was deposed as the anointed King of England by Queen Isabella, Mortimer, the Baronage, Clergy and Parliament. It was a moment of constitutional crisis. Edward II was removed to Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire, where it was rumoured he was subsequently killed. Isabella and Mortimer reigned for a further three years as Regent to Edward III, who was crowned in 1327 aged fourteen. In 1329 aged seventeen he overthrew and executed Mortimer and ruled in his own right thereafter (Mortimer 2003:

The Greatest Traitor the life of Sir Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March, Ruler of England 1327-1330).¹¹

The skeleton known as HA16 is one of more than 90 discovered during the excavations and are in the care of the Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, UK.

Outcomes.

The outcomes of the photography, to date, are the photography Protocols that I have written and are included in the Research Final Report by Professor J.P Cassella (Cassella J.P 2009: *HASDiP, the Hulton Abbey Skeletal Digitisation Project Final Report*),¹² an inter-active DVD that I have co-authored Fig 4.7, (Brown, R & Lucking, P 2008: *The Hulton Abbey Skeletal Digitisation DVD*),¹³ a book of photographs with a written essay by me (Brown, R 2012: *1326: Hulton Abbey & a Tyrant's Death*),¹⁴ a .pdf file of the book, all of which accompany this thesis. There has also been recently a public exhibition, '*Hanged, Drawn Quartered: CSI 1326*', October 14th-November 14th, The Science Centre, Staffordshire University (Brown, R 2012(a)).¹⁵ and international conference papers to the Visualisation in Archaeology/English Heritage/Southampton University Research Group (Brown, R 2009: *The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Photography*).¹⁶ Brown, R 2011(b): *Photography, Agency and Hermeneutic Understanding*).¹⁷

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¹¹ Mortimer, Ian 2003: *The Greatest Traitor: the life of Sir Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March, Ruler of England 1327-1330*. London. Jonathan Cape.

¹² Cassella, J.P 2009: Final Report *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeletal Digitisation Project*. Available online <www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/ps/documents/projects/digitisation_project_report.pdf>.

¹³ Brown, R.G 2008 (b): '*HASDiP: the Inter-active DVD*' in association with Cassella, J; Lewis, Mary E. ; Lucking, P 2008: *The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project Teaching & Learning DVD*. Staffordshire University / HEA Physical Sciences Centre / JISC Academy Distributed e-Learning (DeL) Programme II. Available for PC and MAC platforms.

¹⁴ Brown, R.G 2012(b): *1326: Hulton Abbey & a Tyrant's Death*. Blurb on-line publishing. <www.blurb.co.uk>.

¹⁵ Brown, R.G, J.P.Cassella, S.Lawton, D. Mullany & S.Deakin 2012 (a): '*Hanged, Drawn, Quartered: CSI 1326 a.d.*'. The Science Centre. Staffordshire University, UK.

¹⁶ Brown, R.G 2009 (c): *The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Photography*. Visualisation in Archaeology Workshop. English Heritage. Southampton University.

¹⁷ Brown, R.G 2011 (b): *Photography, Agency and Hermeneutic Understanding*. International Visualisation in Archaeology Conference 2011. English Heritage/Southampton University.

Chapter 5

Conclusion.

Paul Ricoeur and a critical, philosophical hermeneutics.

It is frequently said that Ricoeur's greatest contribution to philosophy has been a distinctive development of philosophical hermeneutics, one entirely his own in which he elaborated an interweaving set of enquiries into the ontology of what he thought a critical property of language: *semantic innovation*. He asks, "How does new meaning come to be, and, in doing so, reconfigure the meanings of (the present and) the past?" (my modification in parenthesis, of Kearney 2004: *Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*. p1).¹ Ricoeur's philosophy is also empiric in that it shares an important assumption within the traditional French concern for the Subject, and within the parallel German hermeneutics of emancipation. That is, that philosophy must find its place and be linked with everyday life by a concern for meaning and intelligibility in understanding and communication, thought and action, that is directed to the social imaginary and to making a difference to the lives and experience of people in the actual world. From beginning to end, Ricoeur's is a philosophy in the service of a concrete human being and something constructive, positive and of practical value (Agis Villaverde 2012 *ibid* p193).

His questioning has often been profound, and his hermeneutic of the text, and by extension, text-analogues (in which I include photo-documentary narrative) has moved our understanding onto a new plane. He made no attempt to build a grand all-embracing philosophical system but to participate forcefully in a conversation. Ricoeur's work has, overall, the character of a philosophy under construction, a conversation that had already begun which he joined and contributed to and invites us to enter into as well; and a quest that was still being pursued wherein separate problems are laid out and examined, piecemeal, until his death.

I am isolating and examining one part of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, albeit a major and comprehensive fraction: what he thought and wrote on a critical and emancipating philosophical hermeneutics that grew from and surpasses Husserl's Phenomenology, referred to by Ricoeur as an 'amplifying' Hermeneutics.² I am not in any sense attempting to write a study of all Ricoeur's philosophy. What I am always doing is looking for correlations and mediations between Ricoeur's amplifying philosophical hermeneutics of this period and the pragmatic business of thinking about and making social documentary

¹ Kearney. R 2004: *ibid*

² Ricoeur. P 1995/6: '*Intellectual Autobiography*' in Hahn. L (ed) 1996: *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Library of Living Philosophers vol XXii. Chicago. Open Court. pp 3-53.

photography and piecing together their interpretive visuals into well ordered and intelligible narratives.

Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics is 'critical' because it is reflexive and analytical of its own operations. 'Emancipating' because it returns the subject to the centre of philosophical concern as an active agency and allows him or her freedom to think and reason for themselves, and 'amplifying' because it is determined to keep language open to semantic innovations. This is a hermeneutics of Language, structured on the model of the theory of the Text, the theory of Action and the theory of History, in which the theory of the Text is pivotal. It is a hermeneutics that Ricoeur steadily developed over a thirty year period from the 1960's, in an attempt to unify phenomenology and hermeneutics, and to counter the challenges of Freudian psycho-analysis and post-Saussurrean linguistic Structuralism (Ricoeur 1991: *On Interpretation*).³ Freudian psycho-analysis he found to be a reductive archaeology of interpretation, whilst Structuralism and semiotics he found to be hypothetical abstractions about systems of thought modelled upon supposed neurological structures of the human brain, that he considered without anchorage in history and the conscious and self-realising Subject (Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another*),⁴ (Ricoeur 2013: *Hermeneutics*).⁵ I am also attentive to his later work in practical philosophy and a hermeneutics of action within the realm of the social imaginary (Ricoeur 1991: *Ideology, Utopia and Politics*).⁶

Central to Ricoeur's hermeneutics is the question of meaning, of interpreting and making sense of life and of being human. The basic hermeneutic proposition is that Life interprets Life, and that human life is a constant process of interpretation. Ricoeur argues that the meaning of being human is always mediated through an endless process of interpretations that are manifest in all areas of social, cultural, arts and science life. We make sense of things in ways that matter to us through these intermediary processes. We also make sense of things through introspection and intuition, and our reality is that we do both using our minds and our bodies. Ricoeur gives primacy to the notion of the conscious Self being fully realised in the journey from self to self through the other, to which he gives the expression, *self-as-another*. Ricoeur proposes that we discover what is meaningful to us in and through linguistic mediations of signs and symbols, stories and ideologies that are given us by our cultural tradition in "Great Works" (and I think, in the myriad small and inconsequential matters-of-factness of everyday life).

³ Ricoeur, P 1991: *On Interpretation*. In Ricoeur, P. 1991: *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. 2nd Edition 2007: with new Forward by Richard Kearney. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. pp1-20. Hereafter referred to as FTA

⁴ Ricoeur, P. 1992: *Oneself as Another*. trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

⁵ Ricoeur P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press.

⁶ Ricoeur, P 1991: *Part 3: Ideology, Utopia, Politics* in FTA *ibid* pp235-337.

Ricoeur argues the hermeneutic process of making sense of life occurs through what he calls “the long detour” of these diverse cultural mediations. By journeying through the language of others the self, that we are, returns to itself enriched in experience and enlarged in potentials and possibilities. He thus challenges Heidegger’s view that understanding human Being is accessible to us through a “short route” of human existence, that he calls *dasein*, which understands itself through introspection and its own existential possibilities. He also challenges the Cartesian doctrine of the self as being transparent to the self through thought alone. By taking the position that we interpret life, and hence ourselves, through diverse cultural practices in which life is made objective, in the sense of being put at a distance from us. Ricoeur accepts that meaning is not intrinsic within language or inherent within objects but is found outside of ourselves mediated in cultural artefacts and institutions, a “treasury of symbols” transmitted by the cultures from which we are sprung, in both existence and in language. Meaning comes indirectly to us from how we rationalise in thought and feeling and interpret whatever is experienced through these mediations. Thus Ricoeur formulates a basic definition of hermeneutics as “*the art of deciphering indirect meaning*”.

The task of hermeneutics is to show how existence arrives at expression, then reflection through the endless exploration of significances that emerge from symbolic works of culture. For Ricoeur this centres within Language and the model of the Text. The written text, or inscriptions that can be ‘read’ like a text (i.e. photographs) he differentiates from spoken language. Writing opens language to rendering multiple layers of meaning and original semantic innovations in their expression. It is thanks to writing there are the resources for discourse. Inscription makes discourse accessible and open to examination and new interpretations. In Ricoeur’s reasoning, discourse acquires a semantic autonomy having a three-fold structure of the author’s intention, the matter and circumstances of the thing written about, and its reception by an audience.

Photographing is where the science of photography enters the field of action, put crudely “doing photography”. A praxis whose *logos* in terms of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic, is when action and documentary photography are together defined as the quest for its own understanding and own-most possibilities. There is a distinction here between thinking under the category of action, and thinking under the category of principles of production and the ways in which ‘facts’ are subsumed under those principles. Ricoeur states that the representative character of the model (i.e. the photographing) and the domain it models (i.e. the subject matter being photographed), remains “a puzzle”. This is so because, he states, it is not possible to consider as *identical* the representation of nature (the empiric world of the subject matter) and the self understanding of the agent in his or her action. This holds true for photography as for writing.

Once the intelligibility of their production is distinguished, then it is possible to ask about the meaning. Ricoeur would go so far as to say that one cannot understand the sense of the activity without doing it. It is in relation to its' project that the activity has to be analysed and the question posed, "why do you want to understand nature" and answers are found in the gradual unfolding of the project and its meaning is gradually discovered and available to interpretation (Ricoeur 1998: *Critique and Conviction*).⁷ Matters that, after Aristotle, I venture to call those of *praxis* and *phronesis* (Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*).⁸

A paradox of absence: room for innovation.

Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics is a philosophy of meaningful interpretive activity articulated through the medium of Language. It mediates Phenomenology and Language with a detailed examination of the poetics of narrative and time in relation to history and reality. Ricoeur moves beyond the traditional hermeneutics of what language says and the double meaning of symbols, to be found in the interpretation of traditional biblical and scriptural exegesis, myths and symbols, to a hermeneutics of what language *does* and is *used* for, pragmatically and poetically, in the figurations, configurations and re-figurations of a poetics of narrative and the aporias of time in their relation to pragmatic reality. It is a critical hermeneutics because it is inherently self-aware and analytical about its operations. It is at the same time an emancipating hermeneutics that keeps language open to new semantic innovations, and it is dialectical, imbued with a conception of knowledge as a dynamic ongoing historical process, in which the way the world is and the way in which we view and shape that world, reciprocally determine each other through an endless process of interpretation and synthesis of alternative interpretations that might well be conflicting.

Ricoeur adopts the model of the text and theories of the text, of action and of history to give voice to his philosophical hermeneutic as a tool of meaning and understanding, that he formulates as discourse and, "...the act of someone saying something about something to someone...". He contends there is a triadic structure to a hermeneutic of the text whose process involves a speaker (author) and their figuration of things *mimesis*₁, a subject and the configuration of a world of the text *mimesis*₂, and realisation in the re-figurations made of the text by a listener (a reader) *mimesis*₃. I think the same can be said for the phronesis of an applied, humanist, documentary photography praxis.

⁷ Ricoeur, P 1998: *Critique and Conviction, Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. European Perspectives, a series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism. Lawrence D. Kritzman, editor. New York. Columbia University Press. pp74-75.

⁸ Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. T. Irwin. 2nd edition. Hackett Publishing. Reprinted 2011.

Paradoxically there appear to be few published attempts to unify the two fields of documentary photography and Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics within the literature of contemporary photography theory, (Elkins 2007: *ibid*); nor contemporary philosophy (Costello and Iversen 2010: *Photography after Conceptual Art*),⁹ creating a perplexing aporia in understanding. The state of relations between philosophy and photography has been recently highlighted by the photography critic Coleman who finds it wanting, commenting that "philosophy's gift to photography awaits its unveiling" (Coleman 2010: *Counting the Teeth: Photography for Philosophers*).¹⁰ I do not agree. It is more a matter of philosophers looking in another direction, another part of the landscape, towards photography as an art medium with different questions in mind, and with that an overriding concern for the aesthetics of the art images. A perspective that over the past thirty years or more has been a fruitful and productive contribution to the philosophy of art historical scholarship and discourse.

Ricoeur wrote about the opposition of Language and the Visual (Ricoeur 1991: *Imagination in Discourse and Action*)¹¹ and commented extensively on Aesthetics, in conversation, but his concerns with aesthetics were centred in language and the poetics of language constructions (Ricoeur 1998: *Aesthetic Experience*).¹² Nor do there appear to be studies published within the literature of Ricoeurian hermeneutic philosophy, made in the years following his death in 2005, that so far recognise and address this perplexing aporetic. This is notwithstanding the efforts to extend the inter-disciplinary scope of his hermeneutics that is being actively pursued by the Ricoeur archive and research centre, 'Fonds Ricoeur', Paris,¹³ the Society for Ricoeur Studies,¹⁴ and through the on-line peer reviewed journal *Etudes Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies*.¹⁵ The work of Ihde, however, expanding a general hermeneutics into the visualisation of science is an interesting exception.¹⁶ A publication of the International Institute of Hermeneutics, Toronto,¹⁷ carries an engaging discussion by a number of authors on hermeneutics and the work of

⁹ Costello, D (ed) & Iversen, M (ed) 2010: *Photography after Conceptual Art (Art History Special Issues)*. Wiley-Blackwell.

¹⁰ Coleman, A.D 2010: *Counting the Teeth: Photography for Philosophers*. Ag: The International Journal of Photographic Art & Practice. C.Dickie (ed.). No 61. Autumn 2010. pp70-79.

¹¹ Ricoeur, P 1991: *Imagination in Discourse and Action*. In Ricoeur, P 1991: *From Text to Action*. (*ibid*) pp168-187.

¹² Ricoeur, P 1998: *Critique and Conviction, Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. European Perspectives, a series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism. Lawrence D. Kritzman, editor. New York. Columbia University Press. Ch.8 pp 171-186. (Hereafter referred to as CC).

¹³ See: <www.fondsriceur.fr>.

¹⁴ See: <www.ricoeursociety.org>.

¹⁵ See: <<http://ricoeur.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/ricoeur>>

¹⁶ Ihde, D 1998: *Expanding hermeneutics: Visualism in Science*. Evanston. Northwestern University Press.

¹⁷ The International Institute of Hermeneutics. University of Toronto. <www.chass.utoronto.ca/iiah/>

art, but this turns upon Gadamer's ontological hermeneutic and aesthetic and does not reference photography (Wiercinski, A 2005 ed: *Hermeneutics and the Work of Art*).¹⁸

Documentary photography and a Hermeneutical Logic?

*"...it might seem...that we know plenty about that much described matter,
human conduct. So we might, if we had always asked the right questions
and had not been more anxious to deceive ourselves than to learn the truth.*

But we can always do with new questions..."

*(Mary Midgley 1995 p13)*¹⁹

In his essay *Hermeneutical Logic?* Ricoeur poses the question, "...Can we speak of a hermeneutical logic...".²⁰ He examines the question of the claim of hermeneutics to universality and the effort of hermeneutic philosophy to reflect upon its epistemological status. He examines Heidegger's radicalisation of hermeneutics as a universal ontology and Gadamer's reflections upon the ontological condition of hermeneutics by reference to tradition, the response from Habermas and Apel, before moving to his own response. The essay became available in an English translation only in early 2013. It seems to me important to our understanding of Ricoeur's philosophical and critical hermeneutics of the Text and Action and his achievement, and how bridges might be built spanning his hermeneutics and social documentary photography. I shall summarise Ricoeur's analysis chronologically, and interweave with his text observations of my own where appropriate.

Heidegger.

Ricoeur begins with the radicalisation of the ontology of hermeneutics by Heidegger. He states that Heidegger sought to overcome Husserl's difficulty with language in phenomenology in three ways. First, by taking hermeneutics as a question of ontology.²¹ In *Being and Time* Heidegger's question is, "what being are we, we who ask ourselves the question of being?"²² The question of Meaning is the question of the Meaning of Being. The being we ourselves are, *Dasein*, is, for Heidegger, the privileged site for this fundamental question. Second is the question of Understanding, implied in the first question about the meaning of being. 'Understanding' is a distinctive feature of the being we are. It is a property of *Dasein* as "being-in-the-world". Interpretation is therefore simply the development of understanding. To understand *something as something* is

¹⁸ Wiercinski, A (ed) 2005: *Hermeneutics and the work of Art*. Chapter IX in In Symposia Vol 4: *Between Description and Interpretation: the Hermeneutic turn in Phenomenology*. The International Institute of Hermeneutics, The University of Toronto. Toronto. The Hermeneutic Press.

¹⁹ Midgley, M 1995: *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*. Revised edition. Abingdon & New York. Routledge.

²⁰ Ricoeur, P 1978: *Hermeneutical Logic?* Newly translated by D. Pellauer and published in Ricoeur, P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press. pp 66-110. Hereafter referred to as HL?

²¹ Ricoeur HL? (*ibid*) p67.

²² Heidegger, M 1927/2001: *Being & Time*. trans Macquarrie & Robinson. Oxford. Blackwell.

already to interpret it. Interpretation is articulated in a discourse that makes explicit the elements of a situation, as an ‘event’, and an understanding of elements that were initially bound to a more fundamental level. The first setting for any such articulation is being-in-the-world itself. It is the correlation between situation-understanding-interpretation-discourse that underlies investigation at a propositional level. Third, what the analytic of Dasein reveals is not a Kantian epistemological subject, a subject of knowledge, but a ‘thrown-projecting-being’. Thus in Heidegger before the cognitive correlation of object-subject, ‘understanding’ is implied in a deeper level of the pre-condition of the ontological structure of future-facing ‘thrown-being’ and anticipation. Heidegger suggests this mode of being is better designated as “care” than as knowledge, of being and care as a kind of ontological pre-understanding.²³

The notion of a “pre-ontological understanding” is hypothetical, logically deduced from Heidegger’s method, and for myself, I have difficulty understanding it. Is this an appeal to the neurological structure of the brain, foreshadowing Structuralism; or to a kind of Platonic ideal form; or is it simply an unverifiable assertion, an hypothesis rooted in intuition and mysticism? After all, in *Mysticism and Logic*, Russell the greatest rationalist of all wrote that “...the greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and of mysticism: the attempt to harmonise the two was what made their life, and what always must, for all its arduous uncertainty, make philosophy, to some minds, a greater thing than either science or religion...”²⁴

Heidegger sought to overcome Husserl’s difficulty with value-laden language by coining a new language and expressions. For this he turned to an existential form of expression and substituted a new sense to each stage of analysis. Heidegger’s ontological being was and always is a being-in-the-world. Thus what is “Intentionality” in Husserl becomes “Being-in-the-World” in Heidegger; “Ego” in Husserl becomes “Dasein” in Heidegger, with the specific connotation and sense of “Being-there”. In this way for Heidegger the relation between Dasein and the World is no longer one of epistemology, of knowledge, but linguistically a matter of structured existential dimensions and inter-relations. Thus a tool is never defined by its empirical characteristics but as an existentials ‘tool-to-hand’. The existential is something to be ontologically interpreted.²⁵

Ricoeur calls into question Heidegger’s anti-epistemological and anti-logical radicalisation of hermeneutics in *Being and Time*. His writing is technical in examination. Thus, where Heidegger writes that ‘hermeneutics is a kind of phenomenology’, Ricoeur responds by saying, whoever says ‘phenomenology’ also says *logos* (the cosmic principle that gives order and rationality to the world) of what shows itself. What must be done,

²³ Ricoeur HL? (*passim*) p68.

²⁴ Russell, Bertrand 1917/1963: *Mysticism and Logic*. London. Unwin Books. George Allen & Unwin. p9.

²⁵ Heidegger, M 1927/2001: (*ibid*).

says Ricoeur, is situate the premiss of the hermeneutic *logos* in relation to the propositional (apophantic) *logos*. If this Aristotelian categorical proposition is articulated, first of all, in the hermeneutic proposition that ‘says something about something’, Ricoeur asks, what relation exists between this apophantic “about” and the hermeneutic “about”? In Heidegger, he says, this is presented propositionally ‘as’, an event that constitutes the moment of interpretation. On the principle of one concept giving rise to a further concept, this event ‘as’ in turn develops and articulates the moment of understanding, and so a new concept of truth is called for. This new concept cannot be defined by the characteristics of the proposition but by the capacity for ‘unveiling’, (which I take Ricoeur to mean ‘disclosing’) which is implied in the relation between situation and understanding.²⁶ Yet and at the same time, hermeneutic philosophy also makes a truth claim, and that also has to be measured against the apophantic truth claim.

Ricoeur continues with another question, about the way in which hermeneutic philosophy must, necessarily, (‘has to’) ask an epistemological question of itself. This is the question of a type of discourse called an *existential analytic* that Dasein brings into play. Ricoeur states that two things are implied by this expression. First, it is sometimes said that hermeneutic philosophy is a return to the ineffable and the irrational. Ricoeur says that this is a mistake, in fact “...hermeneutic philosophy is an analytic that proceeds by making distinctions, determinations, and finding relationships...”. So we find Heidegger uses the term ‘structure’ frequently to express this within *Being and Time*. Second, a hermeneutic analytic is an existential one that articulates ‘quasi-categories’, namely, being-in-the-world; situation; understanding; and so on. Ricoeur states these categories are to Dasein what categories in analytic philosophy are to things. The distinction between “existentials” and categories is based on an ontological distinction between different modes of being: the being-we-are, Dasein, “which alone exists”, and being-there, ‘things’ which are ‘present to hand’ or ‘ready to hand’.

The distinction between modes of being comes to language and discourse, says Ricoeur, “precisely as a categorical difference”. Thus, he continues, “In this sense, hermeneutics cannot avoid the Kantian question of the conditions of possibility of its own discourse”.²⁷

Then there is a third question posed by Ricoeur. No matter how radical is Heidegger’s hermeneutical interrogation, it cannot eliminate the fact “that hermeneutics is born out of a problematic that comes from the human sciences”. Heidegger’s thought is a radicalisation of that problematic. So the confrontation with Dilthey’s hermeneutics, with its claim to legitimate the human sciences as interpretive, is an integral part of the hermeneutical enterprise and an epistemological component of hermeneutic discourse. (This helps to explain why Ricoeur takes up Dilthey’s separation between Explanation and Understanding, which he regards as ‘disastrous’, and seeks to unify them as the

²⁶ Ricoeur HL? (*ibid*) p68-69.

²⁷ (*passim*).

necessary first step in the development of his hermeneutics of the Text and Action, as we have seen ²⁸).

The question of hermeneutics standing in relation to the human sciences comes to the fore again in Ricoeur's objection to the way in which Heidegger deals with the historical sciences and the problematic of historicity. In *Being and Time* this is originally oriented towards the future, but turns to the past through the mediation of what Heidegger calls 'repetition'. However the process of temporalisation implicit in the dialectic of situation and understanding has no categories for its conceptual construction. We are given only a hypothetical allegation of the ontological priority of historicity and material determination in relation to the discipline that studies history. The intermediate steps are missing between the foundation and the epistemology of the human and the historical sciences. So is this also an appeal to mysticism on the part of Heidegger? (My question, not Ricoeur's).

Ricoeur then raises another important question, to which *Being and Time* does make an important contribution, he says. That is the *textual* status of the human sciences, and question of the 'hermeneutic circle'. A criticism of hermeneutics has been that the interpreter's anticipations of meaning are an integral part of the meaning to be interpreted. To understand a text it must already in some sense have been pre-understood. In a word, the interpreter finds what the interpreter is looking for. From an epistemological point of view the implication of the interpreter in the thing interpreted must appear a weakness, a subjective flaw when compared to the dispassionate objectivity that the scientific ideal requires. Heidegger, however, squared the circle by showing this apparent epistemological weakness to be an ontological strength. He does so by arguing for an originary circle that exists in each case between pre-understanding and the worldly situation to be interpreted. This is not a vicious circle but constitutes the positive condition of the most original kind of knowledge, according to Heidegger.

However, Ricoeur states that as Heidegger gives this, it is not at all clear (he says "we do not see") how to return from this foundational ground to the epistemological difficulties encountered in the interpretation of texts. In particular we are denied a choice between different ways of relating to ("comporting ourselves") a text by the subordination of the epistemological to the ontological circle. Must we, asks Ricoeur, deny the psychologism of Dilthey? Must we abandon every claim to measure the meaning of a text in terms of the author's intentions? Must we stop trying to understand the author better than he or she understood themselves? Or, again and perhaps most significantly, must we, asks Ricoeur, abandon any idea of ourselves as readers reaching the intended meaning of a text and of making ourselves contemporary with it (by which I understand Ricoeur to mean, are we not to enter imaginatively the world of the text and, in our consciousness making it our own?). Whether this be with the meaning of the text or the author's intended meanings?

²⁸ Ricoeur, P 2013: *Hermeneutics and Symbolism*. In Ricoeur, P 2013: *Hermeneutics. Writings and Lectures, Volume 2*. Trans. David Pellauer. Fonds Ricoeur Paris & Cambridge. Polity Press. pp 66-110. (Hereafter referred to as HWL)

Must we stop defining hermeneutics as “the struggle against misunderstanding through appropriation of what is alien to us and distant in time and space, as the reproduction of an originary production”? (I suspect there is some difficulty here with the translation from Ricoeur’s French to an idiom of English in the text, which is why I have placed this sentence in quotation marks. Nonetheless, if I understand correctly, these are all questions highly pertinent to the question of the hermeneutic of documentary photography narrative).

In short, Ricoeur criticised Heidegger because he thought his method “too direct” to achieve a full hermeneutic understanding. Heidegger’s new language cut off debate with classical philosophical issues. The return to foundations in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is so radical that important derived questions such as these are lost to sight, or dismissed as irrelevant and inessential. Yet these are the questions that form the basis upon which philosophical hermeneutics was traditionally based, by biblical exegesis, by classical philology, by jurisprudence, and are still posed by literary hermeneutics. It is, Ricoeur, says, through its capacity to return to these questions “...that the claim of hermeneutics to be a fundamental discipline, in the proper sense of the term, is to be measured...”.²⁹

Gadamer.

In his essay *Man and Language* Gadamer recalls that Aristotle established the classical definition of the nature of man. Man, as distinct from animals, is the living being who has *logos*, rendered from the Greek as ‘reason or thought’. Gadamer, however, writes that, in truth, the primary meaning of the word is Language. To men alone is given *logos* so they may “...make manifest to each other what is useful and harmful, and therefore also what is right and wrong...” and so through superiority over what is present, his sense of desire for the sake of something not yet given, manifest as his sense of the future.³⁰ Thus Gadamer accepts that Language is central to philosophical hermeneutics.

Ricoeur writes that Gadamer’s major work *Truth and Method* forms the second link between Dilthey and the hermeneutics of the human sciences and his, Ricoeur’s, enquiry into the epistemological condition of hermeneutics.³¹ Gadamer is much admired by Ricoeur whom he calls “...a great figure of the hermeneutic current...”.³² Ricoeur is, nonetheless, concerned that Gadamer downplays method in the interpretation of the human sciences, and his attenuation of an objective distance, *distanciation*, in his critique. This compression of an objective distance is countered by Gadamer through his concept of a “fusion of horizons between the conscious self and tradition, in an incessant movement of dialogues between them, conceived as being ...the very moment of thought...”. Ricoeur sets out to mediate these apparent dislocations and discusses Gadamer with respect, at length and with great care.

²⁹ Ricoeur (*passim*) p71.

³⁰ Gadamer, H-G 1966: *Man and Language*. In Gadamer, H-G 1977 (*ibid*) p59.

³¹ Gadamer, H-G 2004: *Truth and Method*. 2nd revised edition. Trans. Weinsheimer, J & Marshal, Donald G. London. Continuum.

³² Ricoeur, P [1995]/1998: CC p33.

Ricoeur begins by noting the ambiguity of the title of Gadamer's major work, which can be read either as "Truth *and* Method", and alternatively as "Truth *or* Method". The problem Gadamer addresses is the distance between the human observing subject and the people being studied, that is thought to be the methodologically correct procedure to follow in the human sciences.³³ Setting things at a distance is held to be the ontological pre-requisite of objective research. Gadamer on the other hand, holds that this is a kind of alienation, that is destructive of the primordial human relation of "belonging to" - *zugehörigkeit*-. Without this no relation to an object would exist, he says.

Gadamer explores his discussion of, for him, the notion of an alienating 'objective' distance within three hermeneutic spheres of experience: Aesthetic, Historical and Linguistic. In the Aesthetic sphere, he states that it is the experience of being 'grasped', stirred imaginatively and intellectually, by a work of art that always precedes and makes possible a critical exercise of judgement. It is a move Kant explored in the 3rd *Critique* in terms of the judgement of taste.³⁴ In the Historical sphere, Gadamer holds that it is the consciousness of being born into and borne along by cultural traditions that makes possible an historical methodology. In the sphere of Language, Gadamer points to the things said by the great users of language within a culture, the speakers, writers of all kinds including philosophy, dramatists, orators and commentators, who together create a vast cultural discourse in their works and in the things talked about. These all belong together, precede and make possible every social and cultural use of language. Ricoeur speaks here of "...every instrumental reduction of language, and every claim to dominate the structures of the text of our culture technically...". It is clear that this same idea of a cultural discourse over time, runs through the artistic and historical spheres, and in this sense a single thesis runs through the three parts of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*.

The argument about the methodology of the human sciences conducted by Gadamer, does not constitute the sole 'anchorage' for philosophical hermeneutics, in Ricoeur's view. He writes that Gadamer's path into hermeneutics through aesthetics is 'irreplaceable'. Interestingly it is not a domain Ricoeur himself wrote about, although speaks of eloquently in conversation, in *Aesthetic Experience*, Chapter 8 of his *Critique and Conviction*.³⁵ This is curious that he did not examine aesthetics in terms of art or architecture in his writings, because writing in praise of Gadamer, Ricoeur says that the problematic of aesthetics "...is where hermeneutics finds in common consciousness, its best handhold for shattering the claim by judging consciousness to set itself up as the

³³ In my studies for a Degree in Social Anthropology, which I read at Christ's College, Cambridge University, this lack of distance between subject and object was always the reason given for an absence of Social Anthropological studies of contemporary society and culture in the United Kingdom, happily a state of affairs long since refuted. See: Rapport, N (ed) 2002: *British Subjects: an Anthropology of Britain*. Oxford. Berg.

³⁴ Burnham, H.D. 2000: *An Introduction to Kant's Critique of Judgement*. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press.

³⁵ Ricoeur 1995/1998 CC (*ibid*).

arbiter of taste and master of meaning...”.³⁶ Kearney comments, however, that Ricoeur did write about the aesthetics of language and the literary devices poetics, metaphor, emplotment and narrative

It is, he writes, that thanks to this first breakthrough, hermeneutics can bring about a second, at the level of historical experience, and so return to its chronological starting point of biblical and scriptural exegesis. It is in this way, Ricoeur writes, that the claim of hermeneutics to being a universal requires multiple anchoring points in experience. However Ricoeur criticises Gadamer at this point for putting aside as something less important, a reflection he makes on the notion of “being-towards-the-text”. This Gadamer identifies as a danger of the reduction of hermeneutic experience to a matter of translation. In technical terms, as a reduction to the linguistic model of human behaviour in regard to the world.

In Part 2 of *Truth and Method* are three points where the rejection of methodology is clearest. These are a) the re-habilitation of Prejudice, of Tradition, and of Authority; b) the notion of History as having an effect; and c) the notion of the ‘Fusion of Horizons’. Ricoeur notes that these are the points in Gadamer’s thesis that his critics have most dwelt upon. Ricoeur however sees them differently. The same three points are, for Ricoeur, where it is possible to give a less anti-methodology reading of Gadamer and a less disjunctive interpretation.

Prejudice in Gadamer has a different meaning to a common-sense idea of a narrow, blinkered, even bigoted, view upon things. True, Kant wrote that prejudice as a category of Enlightenment thinking must be got rid of in order “to dare to think”. Ricoeur comments that such a negative view of prejudice is so unequivocal for a critical philosophy of judgement. What makes it so is a type of philosophy that makes objectivity a measure of knowledge, on the ideal model of the natural sciences. By contrast, Ricoeur follows here Heidegger in putting forward the notion that subject of knowledge reaches a domain of knowledge, not unless it has first projected a pre-understanding onto this domain that assures a familiarity with it. Here again I am not sure I understand what Ricoeur is saying here, unless it goes something like this. To understand a subject let us say, sociologically, we must first project onto that subject a pre-understanding of what sociology is. But perhaps not, because Ricoeur then goes on to say that such a pre-understanding is not ‘entirely transparent to reflection’. Something apparently remains hidden, because “no transcendental subject ever attains perfect mastery of it”.³⁷

Ricoeur however supplies some clarification when he continues that “...prejudice is merely the projection on the plane of judgement a fundamental hermeneutical category: tradition...”. Thus, “...*human beings discover their finitude in the fact that they first find*

³⁶ Ricoeur 2013 HL? (*ibid*) p72.

³⁷ Ricoeur 2013 HL? p73 (*ibid*).

themselves amid traditions...".(ibid). I take this to mean that we are who we are and understand ourselves consciously as such, because of the historical time, place, circumstances, and culture into which we are born, or in which we live out our lives (Heidegger's condition of being-thrown). Thus Ricoeur states the matter as, "...*Tradition is positively the expression of the finite historical character of self-understanding for human beings...*"(ibid).

The third term, Authority, of the trilogy tradition-prejudice-authority makes explicit the role of tradition efficient. However this hermeneutic use tends to be obscured by the sense of authority as synonymous with domination and blind obedience. For the methodology of the human sciences, the consequence is that they are built upon a prior ground of the transmission and reception of traditions, with History foremost amongst them. 'Inquiry' (*Forschung*) does not escape the historical consciousness of those who live and make history. In other words, History poses meaningful questions about the past by starting from a tradition that calls for inquiry. Thus in Gadamer's terminology, my Case Study of the archaeological specimen excavated from Hulton Abbey begins from a tradition of archaeology and of history whose intention is to enquire into the past of fourteenth-century medieval England. Ricoeur calls this "a contract" between the action of history and the historical investigation. No critical consciousness can escape from this without risking making its own research senseless, without meaning and credence. So my other photographic Case Study, 'Waterside Side' would be senseless, in these terms, without a pre-consciousness of other ethnographic fieldwork studies.

Ricoeur is acutely aware of and interested in history and the manner of our interpretation and understanding of it, and towards the closing years of his life produced a major book exploring the issues, *History, Memory, Forgetting*.³⁸ It makes an interesting comparison with a philosopher's view of the idea of history given by Collingwood,³⁹ and a contemporary professional historian's view of what they are doing, given by Mortimer.⁴⁰ Meantime we shall stay with Gadamer.

In Gadamer the historical condition of history is expressed through a history of effects. This is a category that arises from the reflective consciousness of methodology, thinking reflexively, not from procedures of historical methodology as such (e.g: searching ancient manuscripts). Ricoeur gives this as a consciousness of beings (people) exposed to history and its action. This is held to occur in such a way that the historical action upon them is subjective and cannot be objectified. It cannot because the efficacy of the action is part of its meaning as an historical phenomenon. (I find this claim curious, because surely the effect can be spoken and written about to others, whether as factual description - the

³⁸ Ricoeur, P 2006: *History, Memory, Forgetting*. trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer. Chicago. Chicago University Press.

³⁹ Collingwood, R.G 1999: *The Principles of History*. Edited and with an Introduction by W.H.Dray and Jan Van der Dussen (eds.) Oxford. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁰ Mortimer, Ian 2010: *Medieval Intrigue: Decoding Royal Conspiracies*. London. Continuum.

historian Ian Mortimer would stand as an example, or as imaginative fiction - the historical novels of C.J.Sansom come to mind, or dramatised and performed - Shakespeare's historical plays would be an obvious example).

In Gadamer the consciousness of effects has negative and positive consequences. The negative is that it excludes from the subject "any view from above" that would allow us to master a view of the whole set of effects of the past upon us. Thus historical being is that which does not pass over into absolute knowledge. At this point the philosophy of hermeneutics is a philosophy of finitude (and unlike an Hegelian absorption into absolute knowledge). In a positive sense, the concept of effective history mediates our relations to the past. (I call it "active presence" in my thesis title). Starting from this mediation, something is deemed to be significant, interesting and memorable, worthy of being related through an historical enquiry. This has been the case with my work on the archaeological skeleton excavated from Hulton Abbey, tentatively identified as being Hugh Despenser the Younger, executed by drawing, hanging and quartering at Hereford in November 1326, Case Study 1 (please refer to the book accompanying this thesis, and to the thesis Appendix). I will return to this point in my discussion of the photographic fieldwork case studies, both contemporary and archaeological, to discuss what they might mean in those specific contexts.

Gadamer continues that the notion of 'effective history' does not imprison us within the past. This is attested to by the third key concept he proposes, that of a "fusion of horizons". The 'horizon' is what a point of view picks out, and completes and corrects the notion of a "situation".⁴¹ Talk of a fusion of horizons taken along with Dilthey's hermeneutics means acknowledging that it is possible to transfer oneself into another's point of view. This is no Husserlian psychological riddle but accepting the possibility of entering into a dialectic of points of view as a kind of performance. This is so because in the tension between self and other, a prior agreement about the thing itself leads inquiry to an agreement. This seems very abstract to me. However the Australian philosopher-historian-anthropologist of the Pacific, Greg Denning, speaks in these terms about contemporary Polynesian and Melanesian islanders pragmatically thinking about and re-creating and performing their pre and post-colonial histories.⁴² The significant point of these for Denning, as it is for Gadamer and for Ricoeur, is that a prior agreement cannot be transformed into an objective knowledge that would negate the alterity of multiple points of view by placing them all at a distance. Were that to be the case then no one would have anything more to say on the matter, no one could bring anything new to the dialogue because the horizon of understanding would effectively be closed upon itself. We do not live in such a world, we do not exist in closed horizons or in a unique horizon with an empirical-objective, or dialectical-speculative character.

⁴¹ Ricoeur 2013 HL? (*ibid*) p74.

⁴² Denning, G 2004: *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across Times, Cultures and Self*. Pennsylvania University Press.

Thus Gadamer's concept of a fusion of horizons has both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, it signifies the refusal of any objectifying closure. Positively it signifies that the transfer to another point of view, to another culture, which is the basis for historical knowledge, is possible. This is so because we start from a prior agreement about the thing discussed and this upholds the mechanical process of fusing horizons together (*ibid*).

In conclusion, Ricoeur asks what all of this has to say about the relation between truth and method? In the first place, the relation is not one of simple opposition or mutual exclusion. This would be the case of historical understanding and scientific explanation were opposed on the same plane. That would be to interpret Gadamer's *Truth and Method* as simply the methodological dichotomy that Dilthey could not resolve. Ricoeur states clearly, that hermeneutic philosophy is not anti-epistemological (as is the ontological model offered by Heidegger). What hermeneutic philosophy is, "...is a reflection upon the non-epistemological conditions of epistemology...". Thus Gadamer's three categories indicate, for Ricoeur, (I quote) are, "...the unsurpassable conditions for the constitution of a meaningful space in which something can have the value of an historical object..."(*ibid*, p75). Therefore, in Ricoeur's eyes, it is possible to give Gadamer's hermeneutic drawn up in *Truth and Method* a more dialectical interpretation between the two terms than others have previously done. It is a classic demonstration of Ricoeur's characteristic procedure of mediating two apparently opposed terms and finding in them a new, fruitful synthesis. He feels able to do so because each of the three historical categories, Prejudice, Tradition and Authority, "...indicates the place of an appropriate critical moment that assures the mediation between hermeneutics and the objective human sciences...".

Ricoeur offers the following explanation. Prejudice does not signify submission to every tradition, but only the condition of the impossibility of removing the subject (i.e oneself) from the condition for historical transmission. Authority has nothing to do with blind obedience to commands, but with knowledge. In the last instance what has authority is the tradition from which we start inquiry. To admit this is not to sacrifice reason for the preservation of a cultural heritage does not happen without criticism and a tension between conservation and innovation. Gadamer uses the term "application" for the procedure that operates in regard to tradition, and this is held to operate in ways similar to verification of scientific hypotheses. Ricoeur comments here that it is juridical hermeneutics that this has been best recognised. Here 'application' is held to mark the space in which the judge is distinguished from the legislator. 'Application' also gets the nod of approval from ancient rhetoric, which is addressed to an audience whose passions it recognises, in order to convince or persuade it. Thus Ricoeur concludes that this is a fundamental category that attests the art of understanding is incomplete without there being a crystallisation of meaning within the conditions of a new cultural situation.

The category of effective history also has a critical counterpart. This is the concept of *historical distance*. Distance is, in the first place, a temporal fact. 1066 was 1,100 years ago. However, 'taking a distance' is a procedural move of methodology. The history of effects and efficacy takes place under the condition of distance. It does so in two ways, passive and active. The first operates in the sense of a passive being at a distance. The second operates as an active *taking* of a distance. In this way the history of effects becomes a matter of proximity to what is far away. How close, how far? The methodological illusion begins when we accept that such a distance ends our complicity with the past, and in so doing creates a situation comparable to objectivity in the natural sciences. Ricoeur here points to a paradox. The alterity of the past stems from the fact that effective history is efficacy at a distance.

'Alienation' in Gadamer's phraseology begins at the distance when the 'moment' at which events are held to have been made objective, is removed (Gadamer's term is 'abstracted') from its concrete site. Expressed differently Gadamer is saying that alienation begins when the sense of the historian 'belonging to the history' that he or she undertakes to investigate is broken.

Finally, the category "fusion of horizons" finds its critical complement in the structure of language, says Ricoeur. In effect, all understanding of the world is conditioned by a common linguistic practice. However if an objective language is reduced to a system of signs that can be manipulated, then it fails to signify that the prior agreement about the thing itself, referred to earlier, implies an actual agreement.

Ricoeur concludes that the only logic appropriate to the concept of a fusion of horizons is dialectic. That is in the original sense of the word, of questions and answers. The epistemology of hermeneutics, he declares, leads to this art of dialogue. It marks the inclusion of the critical moment of the question into the hermeneutics of understanding, carried by the language based community (*ibid* p77).

The Hermeneutic claim to Universal understanding called into question.

Gadamer claims that the task of hermeneutics is understanding all of those situations that occur everywhere in human life in which we encounter meanings which may not be immediately or easily understood but require interpretive effort to unravel. The task of philosophical hermeneutics is to throw light on the fundamental conditions that uphold our ability to understand, in all of its variety. The fundamental task of philosophical hermeneutics is therefore ontological rather than methodological, in Gadamer's eyes. He places understanding as primary to interpretation, which is a secondary phenomenon and not the final determination of meaning. Indeed it is his contention that the pre-occupation with method since Dilthey and Schleiermacher before him has distorted hermeneutics from its claim to universality by isolating a pre-occupation with the human sciences from general understanding. Gadamer asks in Kantian terms "...how is understanding

*possible...?*⁴³ This is, he says, a question that precedes any action of understanding on the part of the subject. Heidegger, he argues, has shown “convincingly” that understanding is the mode of being of Dasein itself. Hermeneutics for Gadamer denotes “...the basic being-in-motion of Dasein that constitutes its finitude and historicity...”. Hence it signifies the whole experience of the world. The nature of the thing itself is what makes the movement of understanding both comprehensive and universal (*ibid*).

Ricoeur closely examines this claim. “The epistemological battle regarding hermeneutics..” he writes, “...crystallised around a precise point...”, the claim to universal understanding.⁴⁴ There is an argument because hermeneutics sometimes claims to govern all scientific knowledge inasmuch as this is all rooted in a linguistic understanding that precedes it. At other times hermeneutics is limited only to the human sciences, *Geisteswissenschaften*. In the first case there can be doubt about universality, he writes.

In the second case, the claim to universality becomes doubtful because ‘explanation’ falls outside of ‘understanding’. (Ricoeur later takes this dichotomy and the mediation of it as his starting point for the development of his hermeneutics II, as I will show below).

Karl-Otto Apel and Jurgen Habermas.

In Ricoeur’s essay that we are examining, *Hermeneutical Logic?*, following the examination of Heidegger and Gadamer’s thought, he then proceeds through a consideration of two further key figures in the wider debate: Karl-Otto Apel and Jurgen Habermas. I shall follow him because they also form part of the essential background and context within which Ricoeur develops his thought about hermeneutics. Both Apel and Habermas, he writes, put the accent on the scientific mode of hermeneutics to the exclusion of its universality, and thus situate hermeneutics within a broader “scientific” setting. A move which might appear to take us closer to Russell.

Habermas and the “interest in emancipation”.

Habermas critiques Gadamer’s claim to hermeneutic universality in the following way (in summary): Gadamer borrows the rehabilitation of Prejudice from philosophical Romanticism. He borrows from Heidegger the notion of pre-understanding and adds it to his (Gadamer’s) concept of effective historical consciousness. Whereas Habermas develops a concept of “interest” that derives from the Marxist critique of ideologies interpreted through Lukac and the Frankfurt School. For the monistic Marxist concept of “production”, Habermas substitutes a pluralism of interests, where each one governs a scientific domain. Within this pluralism of interests, any given interest is expressed in the signification of possible statements in ways that are linguistically prescribed and pre-determined by that domain of concern. (In other words, expressions are couched in a

⁴³ Gadamer, H-G 2004: *Truth and Method*. 2nd revised edition. Trans. Weinsheimer, J & Marshal, Donald G. London. Continuum. p xxvii.

⁴⁴ Ricoeur 2013 HL? (*ibid*) p 77.

technical language appropriate to that discipline). Ricoeur quotes Habermas as follows: "...to the technical or instrumental interest, defined as a knowledge-constitutive interest in possible technical control corresponds the sphere of empirical-analytic statements..." (*ibid* p79)⁴⁵ To the practical interests of a scientific discipline and communicating them, corresponds the historical and hermeneutic sciences. In the historical domain propositions signify possible predictions and/or opportunities for further technical developments in knowledge. In the latter domain propositions signify the understanding of meaning. The understanding of meaning is transmitted in various ways. By using ordinary, rather than technical language with which to communicate; by the interpretation of texts derived through tradition; and finally understanding is transmitted through the norms of institutionalised social roles and status indicators, which actors learn and internalise, as Durkheim proposed, (I take this to mean such things as respectful and appropriate modes of address, appropriate communications between author and reader, author and critic, and so forth).

Finally there is in Habermas a third and crucial "interest" that he calls an "*interest in emancipation*". This, says Ricoeur, marks the distinctive opposition between Habermas and Gadamer. The interest in emancipation moves the focal point of the discussion from the historical-hermeneutic sciences towards the critical social sciences and analysis of the institutions of public life, on the one hand, and the norms and values of social actor to actor relations within communicative action in the sphere of the social imaginary. These social disciplines are identified as essentially being, a) the critique of ideologies, as with the Frankfurt School; and b) psychoanalysis in Freud. In this pair, a) the critique of ideologies provides a field of application. This is identified by Habermas in the following terms as, "...bundles of systematically distorted inter-human communication..." whilst b) psychoanalysis provides the model of explanation. This is identified as "...the quasi-objectification of processes whose opacity makes them inaccessible to a simple explanation, in terms of their implicit pre-suppositions...". It is "...the detour through quasi-observation and quasi-explanation that indicates the limits of hermeneutic understanding...". Hermeneutics now appears to be limited to clarifying misunderstandings within an homogenous understanding found in the tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey (*ibid* p80). Ricoeur observes that this, in fact, goes much further and deeper. He notes that the so-called quasi-observations "unblock" an enlarged and deepened self-understanding. For Habermas the principal fault of Gadamer's hermeneutic lies in his insistence of an ontological hermeneutics. By this Habermas means Gadamer's insistence on agreement, as though the consensus that precedes us was somehow given and constitutive with being. Habermas mistrusts what appears an ontological hypothesis of a rare experience, that of our dialogues being preceded by a happy agreement. Whatever else, such an hypothesis cannot be canonised as a paradigm of communicative action.

⁴⁵ Habermas: *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 135 (this footnote is as given in Ricoeur 2013 HL?).

In the social domain what prevents consensus is ideology. If this were merely a matter of misunderstanding that questions and answers could resolve, then it would be possible, he says, to say where there has been misunderstanding there is a prior agreement. The critique of ideologies implies that what in hermeneutics is conceived as existing at the origin of understanding, in ideological critique is posited as a *regulative idea* placed in front of us. The regulative idea is a form of Kantian schema of unlimited and unconstrained communication. It is what ought to be, rather than what is; it is more anticipation than reminiscence. For Habermas it is this idea of an “emancipation” that gives meaning to sociological and psychoanalytic critique. Ricoeur expresses matters in this way: where in critique there is de-symbolisation there is only a project of re-symbolisation. There is however no project in ideological critique, except in the sense of revolution and an eschatology, a final destiny, of an end to violence. This eschatology takes the place that, in a hermeneutic of traditions, is held by an ontology of linguistic agreement (*ibid* p81).

Ricoeur then turns to an examination of Apel, who situates his evaluation of hermeneutics within a larger project of restoring the epistemic ground of the human sciences.⁴⁶ I shall only summarise this without the detail Ricoeur supplies, in order to identify aspects of Apel’s thought that Ricoeur absorbs into his hermeneutic. Namely, the thesis of complementarity and the thesis of mediation, and the accent on the linguistic character of understanding the world that links to both Wittgenstein’s theory of “language games” considered as “forms of life” and to aspects of analytic philosophy.

Apel argues that understanding is not limited to the psychological operation of logic. It does not have to do solely with a preparatory heuristic. Understanding brings into play a meaningful relation between a project and a situation. This is why understanding remains the irreducible mode of making history intelligible, inasmuch as a singular sequence of events draws meaning from the agent’s intended meaning and the relation of that to the singular situation as they comprehend it (p83 *ibid*).

The linguistic character of understanding the world is linked to Wittgenstein’s theory of ‘language games’, according to Heidegger, that are considered to be ‘forms of life.’ Hermeneutics absorbs this into its ontology. The notion in play is that language and linguistic articulations determine the limits of our world, whilst the idea is that games are simultaneously both private and public. This, according to Ricoeur, suppresses the Husserlian problem of the passage from an understanding that is first, subjective, to an inter-subjective understanding through the mechanism of transferring the intended meanings to others.

⁴⁶ Apel, Karl-Otto 1984: *Understanding and Explanation: A transcendental-Pragmatic Perspective*. Trans. Georgia Warnke. MIT Press.

In the matter of scientific knowledge and hermeneutics Ricoeur states that the complementarity between objective explanation and inter-subjective practical and linguistic agreement has to be shown (p85 *ibid*). “...*It must be said of all knowledge that it unites the two dimensions of praxis: the technical and the ethical dimensions...*” he writes. Indeed, he continues, “...*it is the modern praxis most caught up in technology (that) presupposes a prior agreement about the possibilities and norms of what is taken to be a meaningful being-in-the-world...*” Such knowledge presupposes a communication community that exists, about which it is the task of hermeneutics to thematize. Thus a complementarity between scientific thought and hermeneutics is attested to (*ibid*). Photography is surely one such field heavily dominated by technology.

But why appeal to a third discipline between ideology and psychology to achieve this? Here Habermas and Apel distance themselves from Gadamer. For Gadamer the existential commitment to a tradition is to be understood as an “application” that mediates between past norms and present conditions. The model of interpretation has to be sought, therefore, in the way in which a judge takes a precedent and makes it an actual norm within the act of judging. Apel and Habermas see this a more of a limitation on a hermeneutic project than an aid to its being made concrete. An appeal to tradition, in their view, can only be made in terms of biblical texts and upholding their authority. Their normative value remains unchallenged. However this is not the modern relation to tradition. For Ricoeur this relation now is a passage through a radical doubt and what he describes as a “painful distancing” (He does not say but is, perhaps, alluding to twentieth-century Russian and German history in particular that many today would wish to disown. But also the suffering of other people such as the French - his father died ‘needlessly’ in WW1 - and other European nations and ethnic groups who suffered greatly in their ideologically induced conflicts throughout the twentieth-century). This means, for Ricoeur that distancing can no longer be connected to methodological alienation. The two are different. It is part of the modern condition in relation to tradition. Apel concedes the point, acknowledging that there is no neutral position from which one can consider every tradition from a distance. Unless, that is, one chooses to take the path of historicism and the historical determination of social phenomena. Here hermeneutics functions to reveal its naivety.

The alternative is to practice a hybrid quasi-objectifying kind of science for which the model is psychoanalysis. This consists in treating alien cultural formations as symptoms of *real* relations belonging to another dimension than language (*ibid* p86). This is the case, says Ricoeur, for the meaningful effects that stem, for example, from relations between work and domination in Capitalist industrial economies. Here discourse, work and domination interweave networks of relations that are deliberately made and kept opaque. Their very lack of transparency is systematic and essential to their operations, not accidental and fragmentary (as we see about us everyday in both large public and private institutions such as Banking in a global economy, and health in the National Health

Service in the UK. Both seem opaque in their internal operations and effectively unmanageable). In the face of this, writes Ricoeur, a hermeneutics that bases itself upon making explicit what is implicit using only the force of discourse “...*can be accused of linguistic idealism...*” and, I would add, another kind of naivety.

Apel on the other hand considers this in terms of natural history being prolonged in cultural history. The argument being that if there were not the opacity mentioned then human beings would be able to equate their meanings, and realize the ideal of mutual identification espoused by the Romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and his contemporary and immediately antecedent fellow scholars (this is my naming of names, not Ricoeur’s nor Apel’s I should add). But people cannot. People have not in reality been able to make their history. What happens occurs for the most part behind their backs (as we see in my Case Study 1: *Regeneration: Waterside South*). Thus the integral reflective reprise of its meaning is impossible. All that remains is the analysis of contingent factors of social existence on the level of quasi-objective explanations, for which Freudian meta-psychology is the model (*ibid* p86).

At this level second order terminology and concepts in which actors do not engage, are called for in the construction of models of explanation. Hermeneutics, in return, observes that the semi-objective characteristic of the therapist’s role is always “a partially suspended communication”. The goal reached for is the re-integration within the patient of alienated, stressful meanings, in a mediated and deepened self-understanding.

The consequence of this is that the semi-objective knowledge that comes from the therapeutic model cannot be absorbed into the objectivity of science. If it could then the metalanguage of therapeutic discourse would allow a technical mastery not only of the neurotic conditions examined, but also over human beings themselves. Ricoeur asserts that the only riposte to what he sees as a dangerous state of affairs is to sub-ordinate the quasi-objectivity of a critical social science to a self reflection within the framework of an ultimate self understanding that, he implies, hermeneutics can supply (*ibid* p87).

At this juncture Ricoeur offers a reply from hermeneutics.

The reply from hermeneutics.

The defence of the claim to universality of hermeneutics was made by Gadamer and those close to him.

At a first, formal level all agree in distinguishing between the universal aim of hermeneutics and the limited character of particular fields of experience from which reflection begins (*ibid* p88). On this basis, the limited character of the problem presented by the human sciences is “denounced”. However, Ricoeur points out that even within *Truth and Method* this does not cover the whole field. Historical experience is placed between the experience of art, on one side, and of language on the other. Art even has a

special status given it. This is because art makes the appearance of the truth of the thing clearly take precedence over aesthetic judgement. The experience of language, this is shown to have limits if the problem of the text is reduced to one of translation. It does however contain the principle, says Ricoeur, for surpassing all limited domains that are taken as starting points.

Hence Ricoeur states other starting points can be suggested for a universal hermeneutic than those offered by Gadamer in *Truth and Method*. He cites ancient rhetoric, although rhetoric has limits in that it deals with oral discourse rather than the written text. Furthermore its arguments are limited to persuasion and probable arguments. The claim to a hermeneutic universality lies in the unlimited ubiquity of rhetoric that we can still verify today. Both science and hermeneutics appeal to the same resources.

Another starting point to the claim to hermeneutic universality is given by Jauss and his work on aesthetic experience within a literary hermeneutic. The hermeneutic character of this work is attested to by the care taken to grasp the relationship between author, text and reader as a whole, without limiting analysis to an aesthetic theory of production. Jauss adds to the poetics of production, the aesthetics of reception and the cathartic dimension of communication. In this way it links to Kant's 3rd Critique and further back to the rhetoric of Gorgias and Aristotle. Ricoeur observes that Jauss links to hermeneutics in another way, through the reflexive moment of interpretation in the primary experience of "understanding with enjoyment". The plea for a comprehensive enjoyment sets Jauss in opposition to Adorno, who sees aesthetic pleasure to be entirely corrupted by bourgeois culture. Jauss sets the subversive and educational function of art (i.e literature) against this "aesthetics of negativity", and justifies doing so because of the uncontrollable social character of aesthetic pleasure. In Ricoeur's eyes, the work of Jauss fills an important lacuna in hermeneutics, this being the study of disinterested affects in relation to fiction and poetry. The enterprise has to do with the epistemological argument that sets common sense aesthetic experience over conceptual knowledge, and aesthetic communication over any theoretical consensus.

Ricoeur continues another example, that of Ritter 1969: *Metaphysics and Politics: Studies in Aristotle and Hegel* and the relations between politics and ethics. Ritter begins by recovering the full meaning of the Greek concept of *ethos* in the act of inhabiting. Similarly the concept of *polis* to beyond its reduction to the State to all the lived relations in society. In this way the concept of *praxis* regains its full breadth of meaning as the life governed by a community's customs. In Aristotle this finds expression in the concrete expression of "justness", and in Hegel the philosophy of "right". Both meaning human beings find their reality and freedom in the concrete life lived within ethical institutions.

In another direction hermeneutic philosophy gives force to the concept *phronesis* and common sense (*sensus communis*) in the face of the exclusive claims to knowledge made by science.

On a second level, philosophical hermeneutics has replied to the charge of a narrow linguistic idealism and misunderstanding by integrating an explanatory segment, like that of the social sciences, into the process of understanding and interpretation. This is necessary, states Ricoeur, if hermeneutics is to preserve credibility by going beyond an incantatory affirmation of its universality. It does by folding explanation between an initial form of behaviour, such as is found in ordinary conversation, and a highly mediated kind of understanding that comes at the end. Ricoeur has introduced a close dialectical sense of ‘belonging-to’ (*ethos*) that incorporates the interpreter into his domain of investigation, and the distanciation that makes explanatory procedures possible and a general critical attitude (Ricoeur 1991 *What is a Text* in FTA *ibid*).

Conclusion.

In this thesis I have asked the question how can a dialogue be opened between the practice of social documentary photography and the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur? I further ask how that can be achieved and what might we learn from doing so. What new understandings might be found.

In answer have pointed to both being grounded in epistemology and the photography also in realism.

I have introduced from sociological theory Weber’s concept of “elective affinity” as a term of mediation between the two perspectives, from the practical interests of photography and the ideology of Ricoeur’s conceptual structure of hermeneutics grounded in the theory of the text, action and history.

I have discussed and presented two photography Case Studies as evidence of a continuum of documentary practice running from an ethnography of the present and immediate past, and another from the present and immediate past to deep within medieval history and a concern with forensic sciences. Both are given written contexts that detail the social, political and economic context of their subject matter. These are presented as case bound hard back books that complement the written thesis. Combined they are my completed submission.

I have discussed and given examples of a social documentary practice commonly referred to as that of the Concerned Photographer made by other people. In Chapter 3 I have looked in a little more depth at four examples of such work that I particularly admire. Alongside them I have presented an enumeration of the principle points made by Ricoeur that a hermeneutics of the text achieve, notably the concept of Discourse as essential to understanding, and the characterisation of hermeneutics as being the act of someone saying something about something to someone in a three-fold dialectic and mimesis of Author - World of the Text - Reader.

To round the discussion off I have finally presented an analysis of Ricoeur's argument for a logic of hermeneutics as a theory of universal understanding that concludes the perspective is emancipating in opening to consciousness new levels of meaning and new ways of thinking about language that equally apply to photography. Ways that have perhaps been occluded hitherto in postmodern theory.

I am satisfied that I have shown how a dialogue can be opened and what might be learned from that. The key lies in the return to a dynamic and active subject and consciousness at the centre of philosophical and photographic concerns and the agency of a "capable person" who is an active individual and being-in-the-world.

End.

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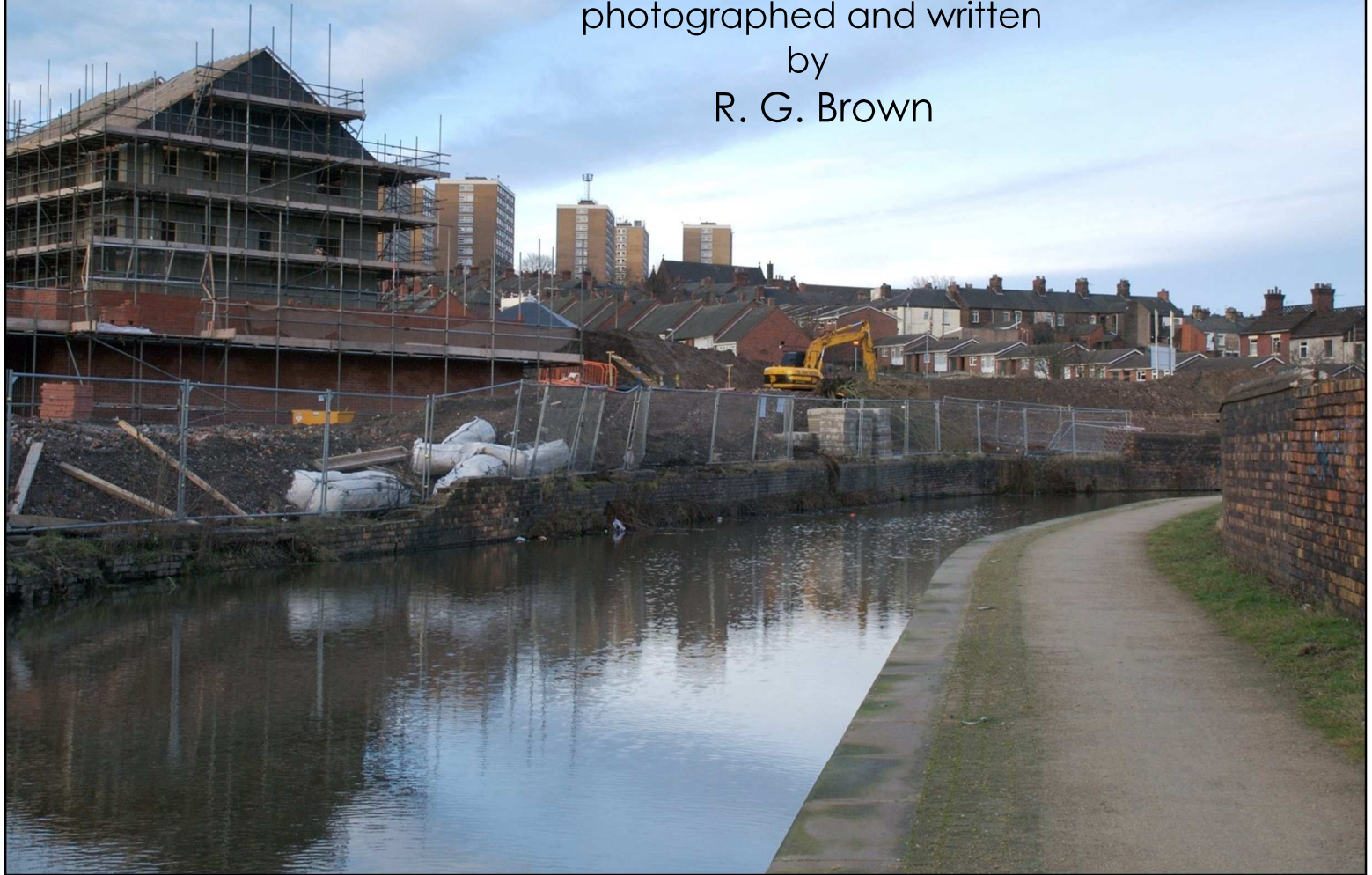
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REGENERATION: Waterside South

photographed and written
by
R. G. Brown



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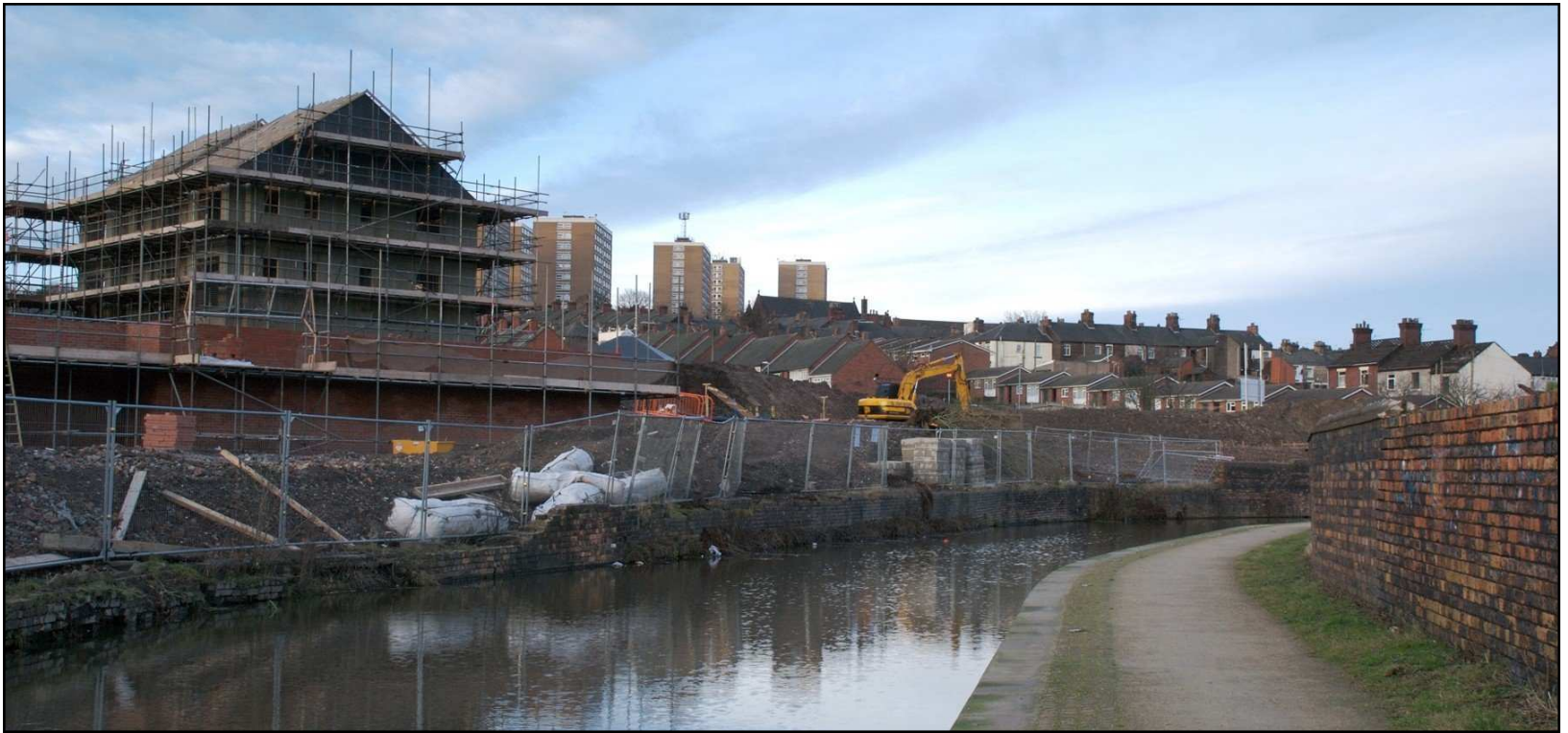


Fig 1: Caldon Canal 'City Waterside' new housing development.

Introduction

This work is produced as a Case Study in applied ethnographic documentary photography in support of my written thesis submission to the Degree of PhD in humanist documentary photography and the hermeneutics of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), Staffordshire University, Department of Philosophy, UK, 2012. My doctoral thesis is titled: *"The Active Presence of Absent Things: Humanist Documentary Photography and the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005)"*.

The photography was commissioned by the Arts Council West Midlands and the housing regeneration agency RENEW North Staffordshire for a community arts project, 'Place, Space and Identity 1', administered by BArts Community Arts agency, Newcastle-u-Lyme, Staffordshire. The principle photography was made in the autumn and winter 2007-08. The work was publicly exhibited under the title, *"Waterside South"* in March-end April 2008 in the Dresden Community Centre and St. Luke's Church, Wellington, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire., and afterwards donated to the community centre resident's association to use as they wished. The work was also published as Brown,R 2008: *Waterside South* in Locke, E and Henner, M (eds) 2008: *The Art of Beauty and the Earth*. Newcastle-u-Lyme. BArts Publications.

The commission was given and accepted on the understanding by both parties that the work was also to form a Case Study integral to my PhD doctoral thesis.





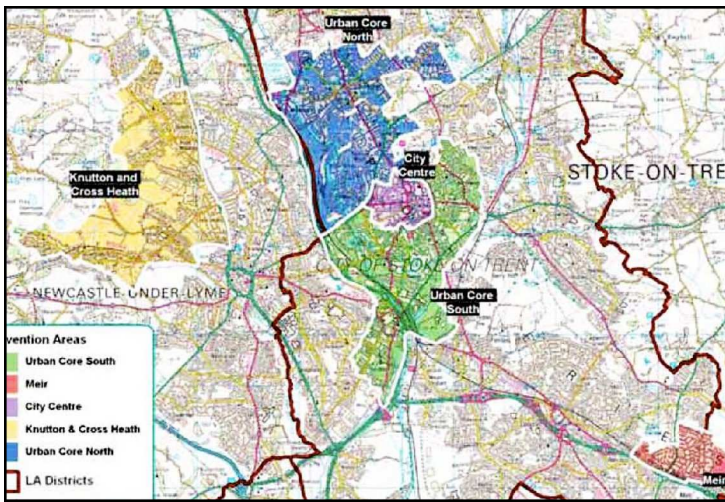


Fig 3: Map of RENEW North Staffordshire City Centre housing development and regeneration zone. 'Waterside South' falls within the area coloured lilac in the centre of the map.

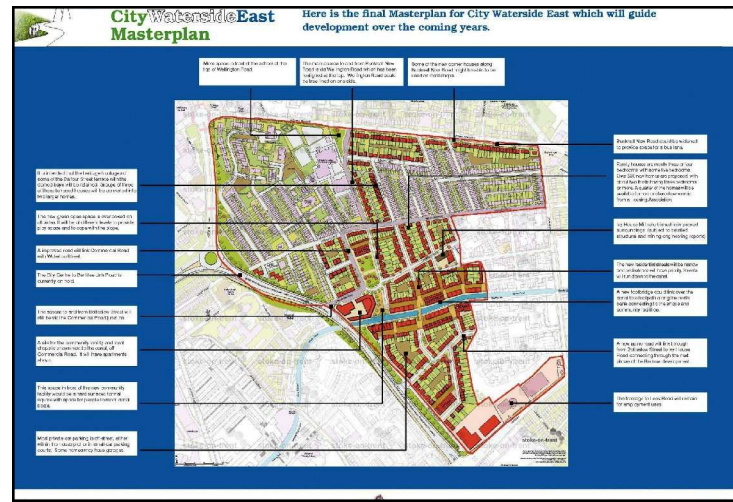


Fig 4: Map of the final agreed Masterplan for the City Centre Waterside South and East development area. 'Waterside South' is the area lying above the Caldon Canal, marked here by blue line running left to right in the lower half of the map. The areas marked in red are housing due for demolition and rebuilding, or refurbishment in a small number of cases.



Fig 5: The Waterside South area of the City Centre housing development and regeneration zone, looking north.

Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, is a medium sized industrial city that grew in the C19th and C20th on pottery and ceramics manufacturing, coal mining, iron and steel making. Like many similar northern cities it has suffered economic decline as those industries have declined, like the potteries, or gone completely like the coal and steel. Employment figures indicate the scale. In the 1950's about 70,000 people were employed in the potteries, 20,000 in coal mining, and 10,000 in steel making. By 2001 those figures stood at about 6,000, zero, and 200 respectively. The last deep coal mine on the North Staffordshire coalfield, Silverdale Colliery in Newcastle-u-Lyme, closed in 1999. The site is now one of new housing and light industrial units.

Manufacturing now accounts for less than 20% of local employment. Official statistics show that unemployment during the 1950's/1960's averaged about 3% of the workforce. By February 2009 that figure stood at 24.1%, of whom 43% had been unemployed for five years or more (<www.pitsnpots.co.uk>).

Official statistics for the period July 2011-June 2012 show an unemployment rate for the male and female working population aged 16-64 stood at 35.2%. (<www.Office for National Statistics 07/11/2012-StokeonTrent/Employment local profile/>)



Fig 6: Homer Street, looking south towards new housing on the former Eagle Pottery and Sports site.

City Waterside South & East: the 'Jewel in the Crown'.

Described as "the jewel in the crown of RENEW's regeneration projects", the renamed City Waterside South and East is an area of residential housing and industry lying on sloping ground to the southeast of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. The area forms the core of the Pathfinder City Centre South housing and regeneration zone. It is a district that in Victorian times and until very recently was called 'Wellington', of some 67 hectares of land roughly triangular in shape. To the south the boundary lies along a length of the Caldon Canal, to the west by Lichfield Street and the the east and north by Leek Road and Bucknall New Road. The Ordinance Survey Map for 1890 shows the area to be industrial with brick works and brick fields, coal mining, pottery and tile making works, and notably Britain's paper mill and the major pottery company 'Eagle Pottery', Ivy House. There were then few residential homes.

The housing built after 1890 was for the workforce of the expanding industrial works nearby, such Meakins Pottery, and also others elsewhere in Stoke. The housing was built in terraces mostly lying roughly north to south down the slope of the land, in regimented rows radiating from a central east-west spine, Waterloo Road, that lies roughly halfway up the slope. The terraces run from this to the north and the south with a cross route, Seymour Street at the top, and another, Commercial Road at the bottom parallel to the canal.



Fig 7: Mrs Grace Ball, long term resident of Homer Street, Wellington.

As the name implies, Commercial Road served the various works to the south of the district lying alongside the canal, with residential housing facing the factories, along the north side of the road.

The terraces are built with a variety of architectural styles to their frontage on a similar ground plan of two rooms downstairs with a rear scullery and two or three bedrooms upstairs. Some terraces are plain fronted whilst others have small bay windows to the front with different shaped canopy roofs. Others again have different styles of decorative door and window surrounds to bring some variety to the street frontages. All of the terraces give straight onto the road outside. To the rear they all have small back yards with what was originally a simple outdoor privie. The yards give access to alleyways which run along the length of the backs of the terraces. Corner shops and pubs were built at the road junctions. In the 1930's a small number of semi-detached houses were built along the eastern end of Commercial Road, decorated with the fashionable Odeon 'Egyptian' style door and window surrounds, and elsewhere in the district, perhaps to appeal to a managerial class.

The original housing was built by a mixture of pottery, brick and tile making, and paper manufacturing companies to house their workforce, and by speculative private housing developers. Indoor bathrooms were added much later.

During World War 11, the area suffered from bomb damage. Where the old houses were knocked down, they were replaced by housing built in a functional 1950's style of terraces and semi-detached properties. A number of tower blocks of flats were erected in the 1960's.



Fig 8: Eagle Street and Commercial Road new housing and demolition of the C19th terraces. Brittain's paper mill is in the background.

RENEW North Staffordshire

In 2003 the Labour Government published its National Spending Review for 2003-04. It announced the designation of 10 'Pathfinder' regional economic regeneration and development zones to provide employment and housing to boost both the local and the national economy. North Staffordshire was one. The Pathfinder zone centred on the City of Stoke-on-Trent, extending west to include the Borough of Newcastle-u-Lyme, and east and north to include the Staffordshire Moorlands. A new agency, RENEW North Staffordshire, was formed as a partnership between public and private sectors to administer the scheme. The agency was grown from Stoke City Council and eventually housed in offices within the council Civic Centre.

The agency was charged with the responsibility for carrying out the Government Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Programme with large scale housing regeneration projects. The government HMR scheme focused on the problem of demand for housing in North Staffordshire. Pathfinder status geographic zones were established in areas of perceived greatest need that cut across local authority boundaries. The idea was to lift the agency projects away from local authority planning restrictions and priorities to an agency with greater powers. The Pathfinder projects are conceived as partnerships of local authorities, public and private sector stakeholders, all prepared to invest financially within the region with monies coming from public and private sources.



Fig 9: Mrs Lottie Hughes, 87 years, lifelong resident of Eagle Street as were her parents.

The Pathfinder partnerships were charged with the responsibility "to ensure that all the essential requirements of sustainable communities are addressed, especially good quality, customer focused public services and a pride in the community and cohesion within it." To achieve this the RENEW partnership was given the following objectives:

1. To retain and attract population. 2. To balance the supply and demand for housing. 3. To transform the urban form and local environment. 4. To facilitate housing choice and the provision of quality housing stock. 5. To promote social cohesion and social mobility. 6. To achieve sustainable communities.

The Arts Council West Midlands/RENEW community arts project, 'Place, Space and Identity 1' that commissioned this photographic documentary project can be seen to fall within objectives 5 & 6. RENEW actively promoted community involvement through the establishment of resident associations, community centres and varieties of social activities throughout the year, either from scratch or building on those already *in situ*.



Fig 10: St. Luke's Church community children's lantern street walkabout through Wellington district, Christmas 2007.

In March 2010 the government Audit Commission published a performance review of the RENEW North Staffordshire programme to date. (<[www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk/hmrperformance review2009renew1.pdf](http://www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk/hmrperformance%20review2009renew1.pdf)>)

The audit commission review shows that in the period 2003-2008 the RENEW Pathfinder partnership received £97.10 million in HMR government funding. In the period 2008-09 about £84.5 million of aligned private investment was made in the whole Pathfinder zone. Alongside this some £45.5 million in funding came from the private sector. This includes some £40.0 million from RENEW and the public sector, and some £18.0 million from the private sector direct investment into HMR projects.

The projected spend for 2009-10 was estimated at some £38.0 million. For 2010-11 the estimated spend was some £36.0 million.



Fig 11. St Luke's Church, Wellington, Christmas thanksgiving and worship following the children's street lantern walkabout.

RENEW North Staffordshire used a competitive procurement process as part of its housing renewal programme methodology. The process aims to find one or more lead private development partners, for example, REDROW Housing, for its major projects and areas. Each bidder was asked to submit a detailed financial tender and design proposals for a sample site. They were marked on a range of criteria including the quality of their proposals against 'Building for Life' scheme questions. At the same time RENEW used the process to help develop a strategic framework for the development of each area targeted. (Source: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, link to CABE: The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment - www.cabe.org.uk/examples/renew-north-staffordshire/).



fig13: Resident Association meetings were frequently angry about houses being knocked down and poor compensation paid.

In the five years 2005-10 RENEW North Staffordshire has spent some £98.0 million buying 1,661 houses and some £120 million overall buying homes and business sites across the Pathfinder regeneration zone. (<www.thisisstaffordshire.co.uk/theseintinel 29/03/2011>).

Within the Waterside South/City Waterside development RENEW has acquired 902 homes of which 700 have been demolished as part of the masterplan for the area. More than 2,500 new homes were planned for the area, but as of December 2012 only some 400 have so far been built. 650 existing homes have been refurbished (*fig 4*). Streets where homes have been demolished include Waterloo Street, Balfour Street, Wellington Road, Dresden Street, Lincoln Street, Ludlow Street, Tintern Street and Bucknall New Road.



Fig 14: Brittain's Paper Mill from the Caldon Canal. Demolished pottery works in the foreground, Eagle Street new houses behind.

The CityWaterside, South and East project has been the principal focus of the RENEW housing development programme, their 'jewel in the crown', centred upon the particular opportunities offered by the navigable Caldon Canal running through it from east to west. The canal links with the Trent and Mersey Canal at Etruria to the west and is navigable by pleasure boats as far north as Leek in the Staffordshire Moorlands. It covers an area on both north and south sides of the canal, and includes residential housing and former industrial sites that are now known as Tullis Russell and Lord Nelson. These remaining derelict industrial buildings were to be demolished and replaced. The former Brittain's paper mill was to be refurbished (*fig 14*). The overall objective was to provide some 2,500 quality new homes, to encourage existing residents to stay in the area, attract a new population of people to live there, and make substantial improvements to the lived environment.



Fig 15: Mr & Mrs Norman Clews, retired, formerly employed by Royal Doulton, Burslem.

A new Waterside Primary School has been built and is open, and some £2.5 million has been spent on improvements and refurbishing older properties. The new housing build figure was later revised down to some 1,750 new homes conceived as a mixture of houses and apartments. The hope was that younger, skilled 'professionally qualified' men and women would be encouraged to purchase properties in the area, contributing to the enhancement of the locality and to the wider skills base available in the North Staffordshire region.



Fig 16: Tintern Street - Mr & Mrs Tatton's first home as a married couple in the final stages of demolition.

Whilst at first welcoming the development plans as a way to breathe new life into the Wellington community, many residents grew increasingly unhappy with the decisions being made on their behalf. Many have lived here all their married lives, often they were children here growing up with their parents in the same streets and houses. Memories are very strong. Most worked close by in the potbanks and works along the canal, and elsewhere in the Potteries too. Families inter-married, their children fought in both world wars and returned to begin their married lives again. People loved, laughed, fought and argued together as people will, but all nonetheless grew feeling they had strong and firm roots in the district.



Fig 17: Mr & Mrs John Tatton, Tintern Street. Mrs Tatton grew up in the house behind her, their first marital home is opposite.

Mr & Mrs Tatton are typical in many ways of the older generation of residents. Mr Tatton grew up in a nearby street demolished some twenty years ago. Mrs Tatton grew up in the house behind her in Tintern Street. They went to school together locally and both worked in Britain's Paper Mill, the building standing behind them at the bottom of the street. When they married they moved into the white pebbledash house behind them on the opposite side of the street and raised their own family there. They are now retired and live not far away in Trentham. Their house has been demolished.



Fig 18: Mr & Mrs Ashby, Seymour Street.

Seymour Street runs east-west along the upper reaches of Wellington, towards the hill top away from the canal. The houses were perhaps originally better built with foundations cut into firm rock. Most have since been refurbished by RENEW. Here as elsewhere, Mr & Mrs Ashby have invested heavily in their marital home with the firm intention of living there for the rest of their lives. Both are active in the resident's association and the Hanley Museum oral history project that is documenting as much local history as possible.



Fig 19: Seymour Street. Here most of the houses have been refurbished.

Seymour Street lies to north of the Wellington district. It is where the famous Stoke City and England footballer, Sir Stanley Matthews grew up. His former house, since modernised with new brown window frames, is marked by a modest wall plaque to the left of the brown painted porch canopy in the foreground of the picture.



Fig 20: Samantha Hall and Mandy Conway of the 'Londis' corner grocery store, Wellington Street & Waterloo Road

Built in the fashion of the times most streets have a shop, business or pub on the corner where they meet Waterloo Road.



Fig 21: The traditional corner shop and off licence, Wellington Road and Waterloo Road.

Oatcakes

The oatcake is a Staffordshire delicacy and staple food. It is a dinner plate size flat pancake of fermented oatmeal and flour served warm with, usually, a savoury filling. Typically this might eggs with bacon, cheese alone or with mushrooms, or sausages, or frankly whatever takes your fancy. Myself I like them with Double Gloucester cheese and mushrooms (there is a traditional Staffordshire cheese not unlike a crumbly Cheshire, but not easy to find). More recently gastro bars and gastro pubs have taken to offering oatcakes with smoked salmon and cream cheese, or as a sweet with raspberry jam and whipped cream. As of August 2008 there were over 40 retail and wholesale oatcake makers in North Staffordshire and they are widely available in shops and supermarkets. Every maker is said to have their own 'secret' recipe. (Pamela Sambrook 2009: *The Staffordshire Oatcake: a history*).



Fig 22: The Hole-in-the-Wall oatcake shop, Waterloo Road, Saturday morning.



Fig 23: Glenn Fowler, since 1982 the owner of The-Hole-in-the-Wall



Fig 24: Glenn Fowler with Betty and Avril, "The Oatcake Girls!"

The Hole-in-the-Wall oatcake shop.

Founded in the 1920's and now owned and run by Glenn Fowler since 1982, the Hole-in-the-Wall oatcake maker's shop is last surviving example of its kind. It sells as many as 800 dozen oatcakes per week, sometimes more, and also has a thriving web based mail order business. There is a tradition in North Staffordshire of making oatcakes in what would be the kitchen of an end of terrace house and selling them through the sash window to customers on the street outside. The Hole-in-the-Wall does just that. Standing on a corner of Waterloo Road, in 2008 it became apparent that RENEW wished to purchase and demolish the building. The issue became a focus for the wider frustrations being felt by many residents in the area affected by the development plans. A petition was mounted to prevent the demolition and save the heritage business, that gathered over 5,000 signatures. The matter reached Parliament and the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Sadly to no avail and in March 2012 Glenn Fowler finally gave up and closed the business. The building still stands at the time of writing.





Fig 25: Demolition and ground clearance of traditional terraced housing at the junction of Waterloo Road and Eagle Street.



Fig 26: Lichfield Street gable end of a partially demolished property with a painting of the City Waterside dream.

The Housing Market Renewal Programme (HMR) was originally envisaged as a ten to fifteen year project. However in the October 2010 Coalition Government Spending Review it was announced that the funding of a separate programme of housing renewal for North Staffordshire would end in March 2011.



Fig 27: Talbot Street looking south towards Pelham Street.

Thus the RENEW North Staffordshire initiative was formally wound up in 2011, despite their work being incomplete and with much to do, and without any alternative, replacement funding streams identified and in place. The result is large areas of the City Centre 'Waterside' district are demolished and lying vacant.

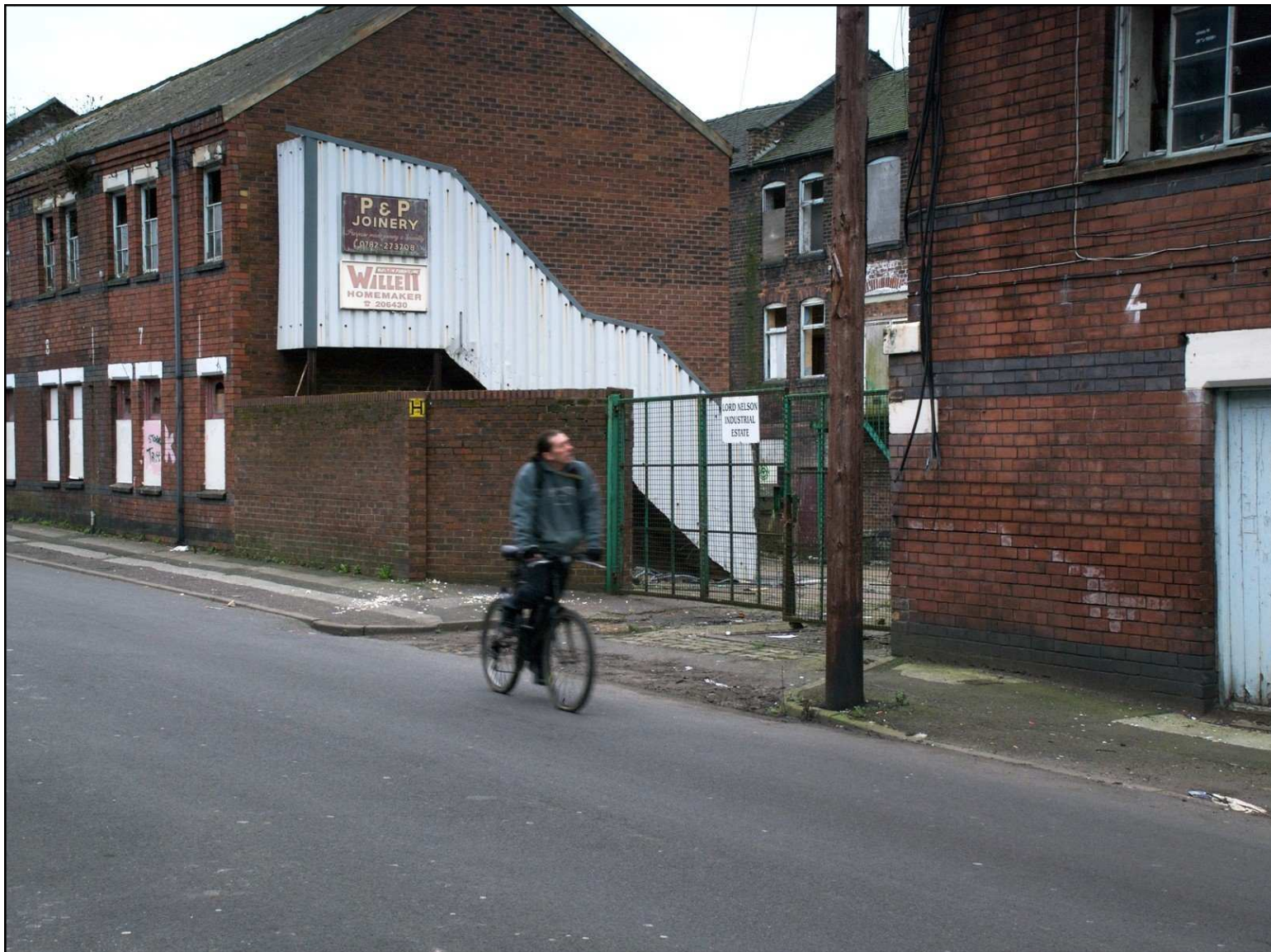


fig 28: The derelict Lord Nelson industrial site, Commercial Road.



fig 29: Mark (27) and Sharon (28) Glover, Waterloo Road.

Attracting a new, younger and qualified population to the area was central to the City Waterside HMR objectives. The Glovers moved from Bentilee, another district of Stoke-on-Trent, because they found Wellington (Waterside South) friendlier, less crime ridden, and more convenient for their work. The Glover's have subsequently moved elsewhere.



fig 30: Homer Street with bay fronted terraces, looking south towards the Caldon canal.



fig 31: Balfour Street, with a different style of bow fronted window to the terraces, looking south towards the Caldon Canal.



fig 32: Eastwood Road new housing development by Haslam Homes. UK.



fig 33: Eastwood Road new housing development sales office.



fig 34: Public Exhibition of the RENEW/Arts Council 'Place, Space & Identity 1' commissioned photography March 17th-April 26th 2008.

A public exhibition of the RENEW/Arts Council West Midlands commissioned photography for the 'Place, Space & Identity 1' community arts programme has been held. It opened with a private view for invited guests on Saturday 15th March 2008, and opened to the general public from the following Monday until 26th April 2008, at the Dresden Street Community Centre and St. Luke's Church Hall, Wellington Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. Over the period it attracted a wide audience and much favourable comment.



fig 35: The exhibition of 20"x 24" colour prints was arranged around all four walls. Glenn Fowler and The Hole-in-the-Wall oatcake shop provided the catering of specially prepared rolled oatcakes, snadwiches, teas and coffee.

The photographs were deliberately shown unframed but mounted on a rigid foam core base. I wanted to achieve a narrative flow to the exhibition that formal frames would, I felt, have prevented. Food and refreshments were supplied by Glen Fowler and the 'Hole in the Wall' staff.



fig 36: Mr & Mrs Norman Clews enjoy their long friendship with Mr Dennis Rowley of Seymour Street whose portrait is on display. Mr Rowley is a childhood friend of the late Sir Stanley Matthews.

Four residents helped me to hang the exhibition. Their comments were thoughtful, and one who initially refused to allow me to photograph him, sat in tears when we finished. "I was wrong. You have captured the spirit of the place and the people here."



Imperium.

1326 and the Death of a Tyrant?



photographed and written by
R.G.Brown

Imperium.

1326 and the Death of a Tyrant?
Hulton Abbey, Hugh Despenser the Younger,
and an archaeological mystery.

Photographed and written
by
R.G.Brown MA.

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Introduction.

This book is photographed, written and presented as a Case Study in the practice of an applied, scientific documentary photography in support of my written PhD doctoral thesis that synthesises humanist documentary photography and the philosophical hermeneutics of the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005).

The photographs were commissioned for an inter-disciplinary research project *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project* led by Professor John Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, Staffordshire University, UK (Cassella 2009). I am the research team member responsible for establishing the digital photography protocols and making the final images (Brown, R.G 2008). The research project has been funded by the HEA (Higher Education Academy Physical Sciences Centre) and the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) DeL:Distributed e-Learning Programme II. I have written the text for this book to provide the necessary additional historical context for the photography, using as my sources texts by professional medieval historians such as Mortimer (Mortimer 2003). Full details are given in the bibliography.

The photographs describe a medieval male skeleton discovered in the course of archaeological excavations of the ruins of Hulton Abbey, North Staffordshire, 1972-1983 (Klemperer & Boothroyd 2004), (*fig 1*). The skeletal osteology shows abundant evidence of severe peri-mortem trauma and dismemberment of the body, typically associated with an individual being killed and butchered by weapons such as an axe, sword or dagger. The skeleton was found in the Chancel of the Abbey as a secondary burial inserted into the grave of a woman and is incomplete (*fig 2*). There is no head, hands or feet and some bones are missing. The forensic evidence shows the individual had been beheaded and quartered before burial. As such it is thought to be unique in the archaeological and forensic science record. Dr Mary Lewis of the Department of Archaeology, Reading University, UK, has recently re-examined the skeleton. She writes, "...no cases of suspected quartering have ever been described in the archaeological literature...this is the first known case of a skeleton displaying trauma associated with the practice of quartering in medieval England..." (Lewis 2008). Radio-carbon dating, historical documentary evidence, and her examination of the skeleton remains have led Dr Lewis to propose these may be the remains of Hugh Despenser the Younger, Chamberlain and personal favourite of King Edward II (reigned 1307-1327). Despenser is known to have been executed for tyranny and high treason at Hereford on November 26th, 1326, by being drawn through the town, hanged from a scaffold, emasculated, eviscerated, beheaded and quartered. The digital photography is designed to describe the pathology of the peri-mortem and immediate post-mortem trauma produced by this process of symbolic state execution, in clear and macroscopic detail.

Acknowledgements.

The HEA/JISC research project, *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project*, led by Professor John Cassella, recognises that specimens of archaeological bone matter are friable and will deteriorate with too much handling. Historically important materials can too easily be destroyed. Educational access to the material is often limited to the institution in which they are held. The research project proposes that a solution to both these problems lies in developing a digitised photographic resource of high quality and high resolution images. The digital photographs have been made using the Nikon D80 camera and *f*2.8 Micro-Nikkor D lens, in RAW format. The immediate outcome of the project is an inter-active DVD that can be used as a teaching and learning resource without the need to handle the original skeleton. A copy is attached to the inside front cover. Whilst there are similar resources to be found within the archaeological community, they are limited and not of the scope that this project intends. The DVD is available in MAC OSX and Microsoft 2008 and Vista formats, and is available free of charge through the HEA (Brown, R. G & Lucking, P 2008).

Although made within the inter-disciplinary contexts of forensic science and archaeology, the intention is for the information held on the DVD and within the photographic archive to be more widely used by others. For example, within further research, teaching and learning in forensic science, archaeology, biological anthropology, paleopathology, photographic studies, and other distance e-learning applications.

I am indebted to my colleague, Professor John Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, Staffordshire University, UK, in all matters of forensic science, and am grateful to him for the opportunity to work on the HASDiP research project as a team member.

I am indebted to Dr Mary E. Lewis, Department of Archaeology, Reading University, UK, for making the skeleton available for photography and for her invaluable guidance in the correct identification of the varieties of pathological trauma that it shows and to be photographed.

Although I have worked professionally in archaeology with the Aberdeen Urban Archaeology Unit as the unit site and small finds photographer, I should point out that I am writing and illustrating this book as a professional social documentary photographer. Neither am I a professional historian of medieval England, but a layman with a keen historical consciousness and active interest in the history of medieval England. I am indebted to the scholarship of professional historians of medieval England, past and present, whose publications I have found stimulating, informative and enjoyable: Dr Ian Mortimer, Kathryn Warner, Natalie Fryde, Prof. N.Saul, Prof Seymour Phillips, Dr Paul Doherty, Alison Weir, G.A Holmes, and others. References to their work are given and quotations published with the permission of the original authors, where possible. Any errors of fact or omissions are entirely my own.

Last but not least I am forever grateful to my wife, Maralyn Brown.

Thank you to you all.

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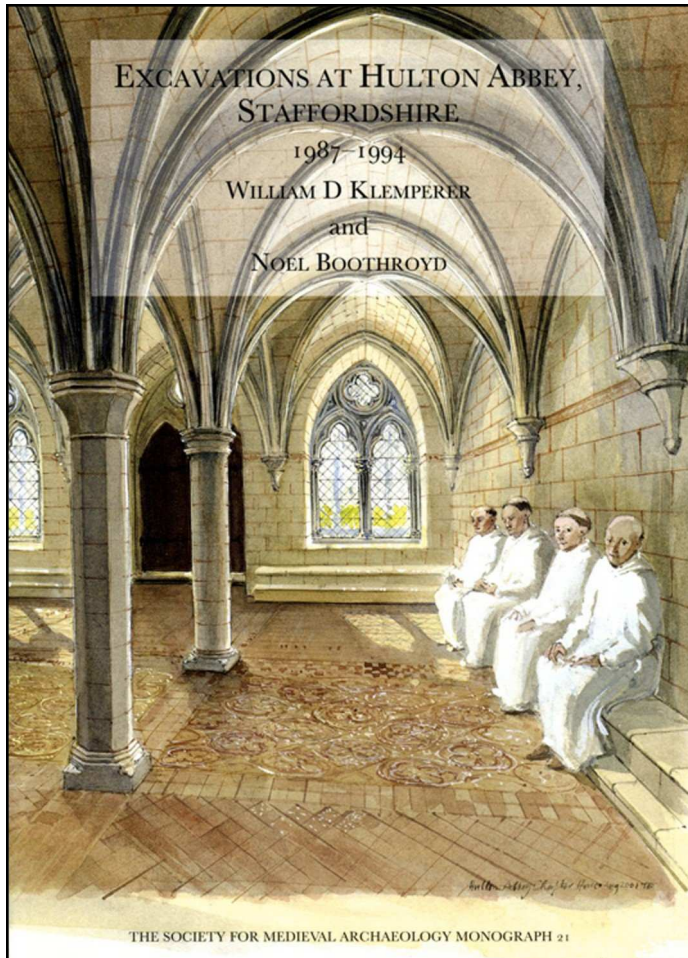


Fig 1: Klemperer, W & Boothroyd, N 2004: report on the archaeological excavations of Hulton Abbey, North Staffordshire, 1987-1994, which includes material from earlier excavation reports.



Fig 2: The complete skeleton excavated of burial HA 16, discovered from archaeological excavations begun in 1972, reported in Wise, P.J 1985: "Hulton Abbey, a century of excavations".

Hulton Abbey, the archaeological excavations.

Hulton Abbey of St.Mary was a minor Cistercian monastery founded by Henry de Aldithley of Heleigh, Cheshire, in 1219, endowed in 1223 and re-endowed in 1235. Heleigh castle lies some eight miles to the west on a strategic site controlling access from England north-west to Chester and the North Wales Marches. The Abbey was dissolved in 1538 and what remains lies at Carmountside, Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire in a district now called Abbey Hulton. Archaeological excavations of the site have taken place since Victorian times (Wise 1985). In the twentieth-century systematic excavation has been in two major phases, 1972-1983 and 1987-1994 (Klemperer & Boothroyd 2004), (*fig 1*). Excavations of the Chancel and the Nave of the Abbey uncovered 91 burials. The Chancel is where individuals of high social status would have been buried including those of the de Aldithley family. By the fourteenth century the family name has changed slightly to de Audley.

Skeleton HA 16.

One skeleton from the 1972-1983 excavations stood out and was labelled 'HA16' by the archaeological team. This is the skeleton that is the subject of this book, (*fig 2*). Two disarticulated skeletons were discovered in the same grave in Chancel area before the High Altar. They were mixed together and neither were entire. Examination showed the most incomplete remains to be the skeleton of a woman, and the most complete to be the skeleton of a man. It appeared the woman had been buried first and the man inserted into her grave as a secondary burial at a later date. The skeleton of the man was without a skull, both hands and both feet, and the right femur was missing. The sternum and ribs had mostly decayed away. What remained was a near complete spine, shoulders, arms, the left leg, the right lower leg, a fragment of ilium and one pubic synthesis. The skeleton of the man aroused particular interest because the osteology of the bones appeared to show that he had died a violent death. The surviving bones showed numerous peri-mortem cutting and chopping cuts incised into and through the bones. The original forensic examination pointed to the probability of the man having died in battle, following which his body was systematically chopped into pieces (Browne, S in Wise, P 1985). The pathology of the damage is consistent with butchering using a sharp blade such as an axe or sword, or both. The visible cutting marks on the bones appear to have been caused at the time of death or shortly afterwards. All the cut edges are straight and sharp, nor do they show signs of friability or later degradation and damage. Browne continues by confirming that, "*...there are no signs of an inflammatory reaction in the bone surrounding the cut marks, nor that healing had commenced...*". It was common in medieval times for the practice called *mors teutonicus* to be followed for knights killed in battle & too far from their home for their bodies to be transported back for burial. Instead and to ensure they reached a secure place in heaven and not eternal purgatory in hell, their heart would be cut out and the body dismembered and boiled to remove the flesh. The heart and skeleton could then be more easily sent home for a sanctified burial. Browne suggests that William de Audley might be the man whose skeleton had been discovered. He was known to have died in battle in 1282 fighting the Welsh on Anglesey whilst serving in the army of King Edward 1.

A recent new forensic examination of the body by Dr Mary Lewis has cast doubt upon this. Although the radio-carbon dates more or less agree, she states the skeleton is of a man about 40 years of age and too old to be William de Audley, the grandson of Henry de Aldithley (Lewis 2008). She suggests that the body had been beheaded and quartered for other reasons.

Edward I had introduced into the State executions of felons the practice of hanging by the neck until dead and quartering the body, the parts being sent to various regions of the realm. It was a symbolic statement of royal power and the parts being sent away confirmed to people that the victim was indeed dead and by the order of the King. In 1283 he added to this disembowelling, beheading and burning of the body especially for the execution of the Welsh warlord Dafyd ap Gruffydd, the last independent ruler of Wales. Lewis describes the pathology of the trauma visible on skeleton HA 16 to be inconsistent with battle inflicted wounds alone. Instead she offers the thesis that this is the first known specimen surviving in the archaeological record of Edward I's full method of State execution. By a mixture of radio-carbon dating, the historical documentary evidence, the age of the skeleton in life, and the association of the de Audley family with Hulton Abbey lead her to suggest that this could be the skeleton of Hugh Despenser the Younger, Chamberlain to King Edward II, who was executed at Hereford in 1326 by being drawn, hanged and quartered. Despenser was brother-in-law to Baron Hugh de Audley, a knight at court in the service of the king and, until the 1322 rebellion by Thomas of Lancaster with whom Audley sided, one of a select group of particular favourites of the king.

The Skeleton.

The Spine.

There is an almost complete spinal column with vertebrae extending from the third cervical (neck) C3 to the second lumbar (lower back) L2 at the region of the pelvis.

Cervical vertebrae.

Fig 3: Cervical vertebra C3. The cut marks across the body of the vertebra show that the man was beheaded. There are three blows visible, one through the whole body of the vertebra at a slanting horizontal angle. This would have almost removed the head with a single blow. There is a second cut on the right superior facet that suggests one or more blows were necessary to sever the head completely. The left hand superior facet is also cut through at an angle. The angle suggests that the left arm was raised above the head as it was cut off at the shoulder. A strike coming through the shoulder from below the head would be roughly in line with the cut visible on the neck facet (*Figs: 3,4,5*).

On the cervical vertebra C7 there is a smooth triangular shaped depression in the body on the superior aspect. This probably suggests that the man was stabbed in the throat with a dagger (*Fig 6*).



Fig 3: Cervical vertebra C3. This view is of the superior, anterior aspect. It shows the unhealed bone surface across the body of the vertebra resulting from a single blow through the neck. A second cut on the right superior facet indicates that a second blow was necessary to completely sever the head from the body. A third cut is visible on the right facet, probably delivered from below.



Fig 4: Cervical vertebra C3. The right hand superior anterior aspect. This shows from another angle the unhealed bone surfaces through the body of the vertebra, and the cut through the right hand superior facet.



Fig 5: Cervical vertebra C7. The superior anterior aspect showing a triangular depression in the body of the vertebra. The bone surface is unhealed and suggests the man was stabbed in the throat with a dagger.



Fig 6: Cervical vertebra C3. The superior anterior aspect, showing from another angle the unhealed bone surfaces across the body of the vertebra, and more clearly the cut through the left hand superior facet. This it is thought occurred when the left arm was raised above the head and cut from the shoulder with a blow coming from under the arm pit, striking through and reaching the neck.



Fig 7: Thoracic vertebrae T10 and T11, and Lumbar Vertebrae L1 and L2, all cut in half along the sagittal plane. (The vertebrae are lying prone in the photograph). The cut surfaces show clearly the unhealed bone surfaces and sharp edges to the cuts.

Thoracic and Lumbar vertebrae.

The thoracic vertebrae number from T2 to T11, and the lumbar vertebrae from L1 to L2. The thoracic vertebrae T2 and T3 have been cut in half along the sagittal (vertical) plane. Only the right half of each vertebra was recovered, the left half is missing. Thoracic T11 and Lumbar L1 and L2 are also cut in half, cleanly along the sagittal plane (*Fig 7*).

The first Lumbar vertebra, L1, which in life lies just above the pelvis, also shows a horizontal, transverse cut. This suggests that the body, after the vertical sectioning into two halves, was then cut in half again just above the line of the pelvis (*Fig 8*)



Fig 8: Lumbar vertebra L2, the right inferior margin. The triangular cuts into the bone surface suggest the victim was stabbed in the stomach with such force the blow carried to the spine. The view shows clearly the sharp edges to the vertical cutting and the unhealed surface of the body of the bone.



Fig 9: Thoracic vertebrae T2 and T3. A medial view showing the cutting along the sagittal plane, the sharp edges to the cuts and the unhealed surface of the body of the bones.



Fig 10: Lumbar vertebra L2. Superior aspect showing the bone surface of the body and the sharp and clean cut edge of the vertical sectioning. There is damage on the left side, probably caused by a weapon thrust into the stomach of the victim.



Fig 11: Lumbar vertebra L2, lateral aspect, showing another view of the sharp edges to the vertical sectioning of the spinal column and the unhealed surfaces of the bone through the body of the vertebra.



Fig 12: The left scapula, an anterior view showing how the shoulder was cut through from two angled directions when removing the victim's arm.



Fig 13: The Left Clavicle. A superior view showing the extensive cutting and splintering of the shaft, found necessary because of the ossified bone projection and the formation of a new joint, probably caused by an old injury and bone regrowth.

The Upper Body.

The upper body shows clearly the deliberate and systematic cutting and quartering of the body immediately after death. The left clavicle and the left scapula, in particular, show numerous cutting and chopping blow marks. The blows were made from different directions and perhaps show the frustration felt at the difficulty encountered in cutting off the left arm. The clavicle carries an old soft tissue injury that caused the ossification of the trapezius muscle and the formation of a new joint. The mass of new bone would not have been expected (*figs.12.13.14*). The cutting runs from right to left, from the medial to the lateral aspect of the clavicle shaft. There is a sharper cut around the acromial end made from a different direction, perhaps from below with the arm raised above the head.



Fig 14: The left Clavicle. Medial aspect of the acromial end showing the sharp removal of the humerus head. Further back along the shaft, numerous cut marks are visible lying below the ossified bone tissue of an old injury.



Fig 15: The right Radius., showing the break caused by a heavy blow from a sword or an axe.



Fig 16: Right Femur. The right hip of the skeleton has been cut below the greater trochanter, which was not recovered from the excavation.

The bone shows cuts at the proximal end made from two directions. One, probably a sword cut, was inflicted from the right hand side and severed the shaft from the proximal epiphysis. The second was directed along the full length of the shaft. It is very straight, and may have been caused by an axe blow directed from above, when the body was lying face down.

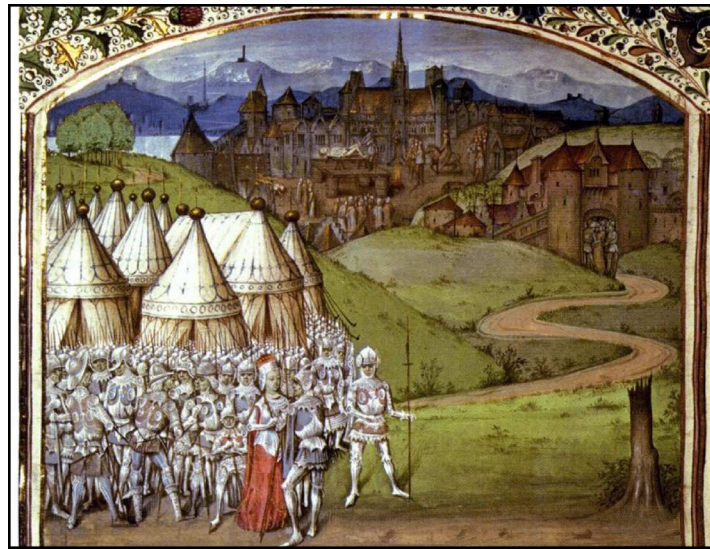


Fig 17: Queen Isabella and Sir Roger Mortimer and her army, camped at the gates of Hereford, 1326. Highlighted in the middle distance is the figure of a man lying on his back in the process of being butchered.

Summary.

In her report of the forensic examination of skeleton HA 16, Browne concludes with the following observation, "...the evidence seems to be that the man was hacked to pieces, and in the process the body was turned over and struck from several different directions..." (Browne 1985). In the illustration from Jean de Waurin (1398-1474): '*Chroniques d'Angleterre*', we can see something like this happening in the middle distance (Fig 17). The illustration shows Queen Isabella, with her consort and military commander, Sir Roger Mortimer, and her army camped at the gates of Hereford, November 1326 (The British Library).

How reliable is the suggestion by Dr Lewis that the skeleton known as HA 16 could be that of Hugh Despenser the Younger? The radio-carbon dating of the bone was carried out in 1990 at the Oxford Laboratory. It suggests a date of death between 1085-1385 with a 95% two sigma confidence. The age of the man at death Lewis puts at approximately 40 years of age. This led Dr Lewis to reject the body as that of William de Audley, for he was too young. The burial was in the Chancel of an Abbey endowed by the de Audley family with instructions to the monks to pray daily for the souls of the family to an eternity in heaven. Hugh de Audley was married to Margaret, one of three sisters of the de Clare family, heiresses of the late Gilbert de Clare killed at Bannockburn in 1314. They were extremely wealthy, owning lands in Gloucester and south Wales. Despenser was married to another sister, Eleanor de Clare, and thus connected by marriage to the de Audley's. The historical record is clear about the execution of Hugh Despenser the Younger by being drawn, hanged and quartered in November 1326 at Hereford, and Eleanor being allowed to reclaim his remains from King Edward III three years later. In life Despenser was notorious, a man hated and despised by the barons, clergy, Parliament, and common people for the favouritism Edward II showed him and the impunity and ruthlessness he showed in taking wealth and possessions from others. Only a DNA analysis matching the skeleton to a living ancestor will prove the case.

2

Hulton Abbey, Hugh de Audley and Hugh Despenser the Younger.

Hulton Abbey of St Mary was a minor Cistercian monastery founded in 1219, endowed in 1223 and again in 1235 by the Marcher Lord, Henry d'Aldithley (died 1246). The foundations lie in the modern district of Abbey Hulton, Stoke-on-Trent, North Staffordshire. Henry d'Aldithley held a castle, Heleigh, some 8 miles due west of the Abbey. Built upon a ridge of high ground the castle occupied a strategic site in the northern Welsh Marches, guarding the route northwest from the English Midlands to Chester and North Wales. d'Aldithley was a Marcher Lord in the service of his feudal overlord, Ranulph, Earl of Chester. He served as Sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire from 1216-1221, and was in command of this reach of the Welsh Marches from 1223 until his death in 1246. He was appointed Custodian of Chester in 1237 upon the extinction of the Earldom of Chester. During his life d'Aldithley was also Constable of a number of other border castles including Beeston in the Peckforton Hills, and was Governor of the nearby Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. So in life he was a considerable figure of a minor Marcher lordship. Henry d'Aldithley, as a mark of his status, founded Hulton Abbey in 1219 in his lands so that, *"...Mass be sung daily by 13 monks all the days of the world, for the soul of Ranulph, for the soul of Henry d'Aldithley, and for the souls of Henry's predecessors and successors, and all the faithfully departed..."*. In a world that believed literally in heaven, hell and eternal purgatory, Henry was seeking to ensure that he, his family and kin, of their place in heaven for all time.

By the late thirteenth-century the family name became inscribed as de Audley. Henry's descendent in the senior line, Nicholas, was created 1st Baron Audley in 1313 by King Edward II. His cousin in the cadet line, Hugh de Audley of Stratton Audley, Oxfordshire, came to prominence in the court of Edward II upon being dubbed 'Knight' in November 1311, after which he joined the king's household. Edward was notorious for showing great favour to certain men at his court. Foremost amongst these was the Gascon, Piers Gaveston. Gaveston died in 1312 at the hands of Edward's cousin, Thomas Earl of Lancaster. Although overlooked by Edward to begin with, Hugh Audley was by 1315 drawn close to the king as one of his 'inner court' of the three men Edward now especially favoured. In 1317 Audley formally pledged his personal allegiance to the king as his Knight in Arms. Edward, in return, rewarded Audley with marriage to his niece, Margaret de Clare, widow of Gaveston, and co-heiress of Gilbert, 8th Earl of Gloucester who had died at Bannockburn in 1314. Margaret was then Dowager Countess of Cornwall and a most wealthy woman. Hugh de Audley received the title Baron of Audley in 1316 following the death of Nicholas. Thus by this time Hugh de Audley had become a wealthy and influential magnate with the ear of the king.

His marriage also made him brother-in-law to Hugh Despenser the Younger, another of Edward's inner circle. Despenser was married to Eleanor de Clare, sister to Margaret and Elizabeth, all three being joint heiresses of the Gloucester estates. Despenser was the son of another Hugh Despenser, known as 'The Elder', who served in the courts of both Edward I and Edward II.

In 1318 Edward appointed Despenser the Younger as his Chamberlain. This gave Despenser control of the king's household over who was granted access to the king. It was a position of power, influence and prestige. By 1320 Despenser stood high in the king's favour, and by 1322 Edward declared him to be his single and "most loved" companion, confidant and advisor. Despenser took full advantage of his position to increase his influence by barring most Barons from access to the king, and to increase his wealth and landholdings, including cheating Hugh de Audley from some of his lands. Above all Despenser wanted more of the rich de Clare inheritance and to be made Earl of Gloucester. The Lanercost Chronicle says of him at this time that he was, "...a most avaricious man...who...contrived by different means and tricks that he alone should possess the lands and revenues thereof ..." of the Gloucester estate, and the estates of others.

By 1321 Hugh de Audley, now Baron Audley, had fallen from grace after joining with Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, the second most powerful man in the country and leader of the northern counties baronage. Lancaster brought the Northern Barons, and the Welsh Marcher Barons, in the west and south of the country, into open rebellion against the king. The Barons were protesting at what they saw as Edward's excessive favouritism of Despenser the Younger, and his forgoing the rule of the Ordinances by which they and Parliament sought to check the king's powers. The Welsh Marcher Barons were led by Humphrey de Bohun, 4th Earl of Hereford and by Sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, one of the most able military commanders of his generation. They especially disputed Edward's right to seize lands in the Welsh Gower with the clear intention of handing them to Despenser. The king refused to listen to their protests. Bohun, Mortimer and others of the Welsh Marcher Barons determined, in 1321-22, to wage a private war on the Despensers, elder and younger, and destroy them. In response Despenser the Younger persuaded the king to raise a royal army in his defence. This meant the Barons were now compelled to choose between their loyalty to the king and their wish to rid themselves of Despenser. They chose to fight and the Northern Barons under Lancaster joined with them. The alliance, known as the 'Contrarians', however, fractured because of personal animosities. Edward gave battle to Lancaster, separately, at Boroughbridge, near York in March 1322. Thomas Lancaster was defeated and he was summarily executed, as were many of the other 'Contrarians'. Thomas was taken to his castle at Pontefract and executed by being drawn, hanged and quartered, with Despenser the Younger sitting amongst those called to give judgement upon him. de Bohun and Mortimer soon after, surrendered at Shrewsbury with de Bohun also being executed, but Mortimer was sent to the Tower of London and imprisoned. Hugh de Audley was also captured but was spared execution. He was imprisoned in Berkhamstead Castle and in 1325 moved on to Nottingham Castle, from which he eventually escaped. With the power of the feudal Barons effectively destroyed, Edward and Despenser together ruled England unopposed, from 1322. Not, however, through good Governance of the realm, as Magna Carta decreed, but, states Fryde, through fear and tyranny (Fryde 1979).



Fig 18. *The Medieval Wheel of Fortune.*
from John Lydgate (1398-1474): 'Chroniques d'Angleterre'; the "Troy Book" and "Seige of Thebes" ca. 1457.
The British Library. Royal 19D.ii.f.30v.

3

The Wheel of Fortune

Hereford, November 1326.

On November 26th, 1326, a self-starved man and two others were brought to the cathedral city of Hereford, in the Welsh borderlands.

He was Hugh Despenser the Younger, Lord of Glamorgan, Chamberlain and favourite of Edward II. Along with Despenser were Edward's Chancellor the cleric Robert Baldock, and a Despenser vassal Simon de Reading. They were each brought on horseback with a crown of nettles circling their heads. To show their disgrace they wore, reversed, surcoats bearing their coat arms. Despenser wore not his coat of arms but those of his wife, Eleanor de Clare, to show the people looking on that his wealth was due to her inheritance and was not his own. On his front he bore a placard with a written text from Psalm 51, beginning with the words, "*Why do you glory in malice, you who are mighty in iniquity?*" (Mortimer 2003 p160; Phillips 2010 p518).

The men and their escort were met by "...large and noisy crowds who blew on horns and trumpets..." and who shouted abuse and villification at them. Finally the crowd dragged the men from their horses and forced them to enter the city gates on foot. They walked with Simon de Reading leading and carrying high above their heads his standard, reversed in disgrace, that bore his arms. The three were taken to the market square and there presented to Queen Isabella, her war leader Roger de Mortimer of Wigmore (who had escaped from the Tower of London three years previously), Henry, the Earl of Lancaster and other assembled Barons, Lords, Bishops and Clergy of the realm, along with a mass of common people. Watched over by Isabella, Mortimer assembled a Tribunal of himself, Henry of Lancaster, the Earls of Kent and Norfolk, Sir Thomas Wake, Lord and Baron of Blisworth and Deeping Nottinghamshire, and Sir William Trussell of Billesley, Warwickshire. Wake and Trussell were formerly both retainers of the executed Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. The same Tribunal had in September sat in judgement at Bristol on the newly captured Hugh Despenser the Elder, who they sentenced to death by hanging. Their task now was to sit in judgement upon Hugh Despenser the Younger, and to deliver justice upon his head.

King Edward II and England 1326.



King Edward II ruled from 1307-January 1327, when he was deposed by his Queen, Isabella and by Parliament. Medieval society in England was broadly structured into three "estates": the secular estate of the Barons, Lords and Knighthood; the spiritual estate of the Pope, the Catholic Church, Bishops and clergy; and the secular estate of Parliament, Freeman, Merchants, Vassals, Commoners, and Serfs. Magna Carta or "The Great Charter" of 1215, and revised in 1297, decreed that the King of the Realm, although an absolute monarch, ruled only through the law of the land and only by consent.

Although the power of the king was very great it was not arbitrary, a matter of personal prejudice, but based on the principle of law and responsibility to the whole Community of the Realm. To be effective a king must reign with the consensus and co-operation of the Barons, the Pope, Bishops and clergy, and Parliament.

In this hierarchy of power and responsibility the Barons were a warrior class. Military men they were fighters raised and trained to joust in times of peace, and fight for their king in times of war, to the death if need be. Writing about the powerful Sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, who figures large in the story of Edward II, the historian Ian Mortimer (no relation) puts it like this. "...Roger Mortimer was not a man who hated war, but one who saw war as his honourable duty, his profession and a matter of pride...like the warrior king Edward I, his vision of himself was as a war leader in arms..." (Mortimer 2003 p78). It was a role in which he excelled.

A monarch was expected to be a warrior and a man of strong character governing within the law. A leader of men and a brave fighter in times of warfare, bound by aristocratic codes of chivalry that extended across Western Europe, and at the same time a man of God, pious and bound by codes of allegiance to the Pope and Catholic Church. It was an ideal that was to die, finally, along with the death of King Richard III in 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth. Richard was the last English monarch to lead his army in battle. The historical chronicles such as *Vita Edwardi Secundi* record that Edward II could not meet these expectations and live up to the ideal, unlike his father King Edward I (Childs ed. 2005). As so often with a particularly powerful man, the inheriting son could not live in his shadow. Although he was accounted brave in battle he was an inept tactician, as the disastrous battle with the Scots at Bannockburn in 1314 showed. In his character Edward II was given to showing an excess of favouritism towards certain men at court whom he accounted his personal friends. He was accused repeatedly of taking counsel from them rather than the generality of barons, nobles, bishops and Parliament. This had been the case with the Gascon knight, Piers Gaveston, early in his reign, and after Gaveston's execution by Thomas of Lancaster in 1314, was again so from late in 1315, towards three courtiers in particular, Roger d'Amory, William Montacute, and Hugh de Audley. The *Vita Edwardi Secundi* says that taken together, the behaviour of the three became "notorious"; and in the chronicle *Flores Historium* as being "worse than Pier's" (Luard ed.1890).

To these three men was added Hugh Despenser the Younger, son of Hugh Despenser the Elder. Hitherto the chronicles say the king had shown little undue regard for him. Perhaps that was why the magnates, wearied of the king, caused Despenser to be appointed Chamberlain in Edward's household in the summer of 1318, "at the request and counsel of the magnates". The appointment brought Despenser into close daily contact with Edward. As Chamberlain Despenser controlled the king's close household, those who served in it and those who were granted access to the king. Those wishing to meet with Edward had first to go through the Chamberlain. Despenser gradually denied the magnates the access they sought and his appointment was a decision they would bitterly regret. For Despenser was an ambitious man.

Hugh Despenser the Younger.



Hugh Despenser the Younger (ca.1286-1326) was the son and heir of Hugh le Despenser Earl of Winchester, and grandson of William, 9th Earl of Warwick. His father, Hugh le Despenser "the Elder" served in the courts of both Edward I and Edward II. Despenser the Younger was dubbed "Knight" at the same knighting ceremony of Edward of Carnafon, the future Edward II, in May 1306. The chronicle of Langtoft accounts Despenser as being "of the most noble" of the near 300 new knights created.

In 1306 Edward I married Despenser the Younger to his grand-daughter, Eleanor de Clare, second daughter of Gilbert de Clare, 9th Lord of Clare and 7th Earl of Hertford. Eleanor was thus the niece of Edward II. Gilbert de Clare was a Welsh Marcher Baron and a wealthy man with extensive landholdings in South Wales, England and Ireland. Gilbert, known as 'the Red' because of his hair colour, was reckoned as "the single most powerful magnate in the kingdom" until his death in 1295 (Underhill 2000). His son, also Gilbert, inherited his land and titles. Gilbert by now the 8th Earl of Gloucester died in 1314 fighting at the Battle of Bannockburn. Eleanor along with her two sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth were Gilbert's co-heiresses. Bannockburn was a disaster for Edward II. It was because of his military ineptitude that the English army became bogged and the flower of English chivalry died on the spear points of Bruce's Scottish infantry schiltrons.

Medieval law and custom decreed that when a woman married her husband assumed her property as though it was his own. When Eleanor came into her inheritance, Despenser took control of her estate and became a very wealthy man. Because the inheritance was divided in three Despenser could not receive it all. He did, however, possess most of Glamorgan, the richest part of the estate. Eleanor's sister Margaret was married to Roger d'Amory, and Elizabeth to Hugh de Audley. Despenser turned the king against both men and 'persuaded' them to give him more of their de Clare lands, with the king's tacit approval. Despenser's ambition was to make himself Earl of Gloucester. He acted against both d'Amory and de Audley to remove them from the king's favour by fair means or foul. He was also now the sworn enemy and rival of Sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore. Mortimer had gained the respect of Edward II by serving him well as Justiciar of Ireland and as his negotiator in 1318, dealing with Thomas Earl of Lancaster and his northern barons. In both Mortimer showed he was amongst the most able of his generation amongst Edward's barons.

The Despenser Wars 1321-22.

By late 1320 Edward had begun to make clear to all his growing obsession with the younger Hugh Despenser. He seized lands in the Gower peninsular with the clear intention of handing them to Despenser. The Welsh barons were outraged and moved to open rebellion against him. Edward was flouting the law of the realm, and to the magnates it appeared he was attempting to rule as though England was his personal fiefdom to dispose as he wished. In law, by custom and by history, the Welsh Marcher barons differed from their English counterparts. They were able to acquire land on their own initiative and without the need for royal assent. The English barons could not do this. The Welsh claimed their freedom to do so as an ancient Marcher privilege. Edward's seizure of the Gower flew in the face of that privilege, and it flew in the face of Magna Carta. By 1321 the combination of Edward's favour towards Despenser and Despenser's own ambition brought both the Welsh and Northern Barons into open revolt, and England to the brink of civil war. It was clear to them that Edward would not stand in the way of Despenser and deny him his ambitions. Despenser was seen to be acting royally as though he were the king of the realm. The combined Welsh and Northern counties barons declared war on the Despensers, father and son. They moved to destroy them and seize their castles, lands and wealth.

Under the leadership of Sir Henry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, the Welsh marched to seize and lay waste the Despenser's lands in South Wales. Their declared purpose was to force Edward to banish the Despensers from the realm, Hugh the Younger in particular, as Edward had been forced to banish Gaveston in earlier years. Unfortunately for them Despenser persuaded Edward to raise a royal army in his defence. This was a tragedy for the Barons who were royalist in their allegiances. They did not wish to fight their king. They were now being forced into open rebellion against the king or stand by and accept the corruption and greed of Despenser the Younger. They chose to rebel. Quite soon the faction of Welsh and Northern Barons under Thomas of Lancaster divided amongst itself. Older enmities surfaced and split them apart. In the Welsh Marches Mortimer faced Edward in January 1322 at Shrewsbury. Mortimer no longer had Lancaster to support him, and at his rear he had a Welsh army loyal to the king. He was outnumbered and surrendered along with his uncle, Mortimer of Chirk. Edward chose not to pardon nor execute either man, instead he sent them in chains to the Tower of London and imprisoned them. Mortimer of Chirk was to die there, but his nephew Roger Mortimer later escaped and sought refuge in France.

In the North matters came to a head on 16th March 1322. At Boroughbridge near to York, Edward defeated the army of Thomas Earl of Lancaster. This time Edward took a terrible retribution. This was the Lancaster who had summarily executed his friend Piers Gaveston in 1314. Lancaster was put on trial but not allowed to speak in his defence. On the tribunal sat Edward and both Despensers, the Elder and Younger, and other barons loyal to the king. Lancaster was adjudged guilty of high treason. He was taken to his castle at Pontefract and there hanged, beheaded and quartered. Six other northern Barons were similarly executed. Edward also brought the defeated Welsh barons and executed them too. More than a dozen peers and knights were executed and their wives and children stripped of land, homes, wealth and possessions. *"...All opposition to the king had been ruthlessly and very visibly crushed..."* writes Mortimer (*ibid* p125)



The Wheel of Fortune had turned. In fourteenth-century society people accepted the philosophy of the wheel of fortune. It was seen as the cycle in human affairs that carried men and women to the heights of reward and success, and then turned, plunging them into depths of hardship, loss, humiliation and death. In the years 1322-1326 the wheel turned to favour the Despensers, especially the son Hugh the Younger. It threw down the power of the Welsh Marcher and the Northern counties Barons, Lords, and the Church. Only to turn once again in the autumn of 1326 and plunge both Despensers to their executions, and the king, Edward II to the ignomy of being deposed from his throne in 1327. Edward was imprisoned and probably died in Berkeley Castle (there is a contrary thesis that he escaped and fled to a monastery in Italy where he lived out his days). The Marcher Lord, Sir Roger Mortimer rose again to the heights of power as regent to King Edward III and consort to his mother the Queen Isabella.

The Tyranny.

Mortimer writes that following the success of the Battle of Boroughbridge, "...Edward had complete faith in Hugh Despenser the Younger, and trusted his loyalty and judgement...Despenser had become the pivot upon which the balance of Edward's reign turned..." (Mortimer *ibid* p153). Together they ruled the country without opposition, against the rule of Magna Carta, and with disregard for the law and the community of the realm. They enriched themselves by seizing land, property and wealth where-ever they took the fancy, with their power unchecked by the Magnates, Church or Parliament. Their rule was harsh and people lived in fear of them, not in a spirit of willing consensus and lawful support for their king. Fryde calls these the four years of The Tyranny (Fryde 1979). The chronicle, *Vita Edwardi Secundi* records in 1325 that, "...the harshness of the king today has increased so much that no one, however great and wise, dares to cross his will. Thus parliaments, colloquies and councils decide nothing these days. For the nobles of the realm, terrified by threats and penalties inflicted on others, let the king have free play..." (Childe *ibid*).

Despenser the Younger took full advantage of the king's favour. To enrich himself he ruthlessly stripped land, property and wealth from the defeated Barons and Lords, from their widows and from their children. He even stripped land and property from the Queen, Isabella, on the grounds that she was French and so untrustworthy. The king stood by and allowed Despenser to both legally and illegally tyrannise his subjects with impunity. In consequence Hugh Despenser the Younger became the most hated, feared and despised of men. Despised and hated not the least by Isabella, for his treatment of her, a noble daughter of the King of France, but also because Despenser came between her and her lord the king. More seriously for Edward he endangered himself and brought the royal monarchy into disrepute by binding himself so closely to Despenser, and brooking no criticism of him from any quarter. The situation became such, writes the medieval historian Saul, that so closely bound were he and Despenser, that the downfall of Hugh Despenser inevitably also meant the downfall and deposition of Edward from the throne of England (Saul 1984).

Invasion 1326.



England had not been invaded since 1139 when Mathilde sought to gain the throne. In 1326 Isabella, Edward's Queen, was in Paris with their son, the future Edward III. Roger Mortimer had engineered his escape from the Tower of London and eventually joined her there. Together they planned and executed an invasion of England, to remove Despenser the Younger from the English court and destroy both him and his father once and for all. Under the command of Mortimer, Isabella came by sea from Hainault, in modern Belgium, in a fleet of ninety-five ships with about 1,100-1,500 mercenary infantrymen. On the 24th September 1326 they landed on the north bank of the River Orwell in Suffolk. Immediately after landing Isabella wrote letters to the citizens of London, whose support she needed, and to other cities and towns in the realm. She wrote to explain her purpose in invading. She came, she said, to avenge the murder of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster in 1322, and *"to rid the realm of the evil Despensers, father and son"*, along with the Chancellor, Robert Baldock.

They were enemies of the realm, she stated, and asked all the citizens to support her and her cause, against the King if necessary. The following day she dressed in widow's weeds "as if on a pilgrimage", and with the royal banners flying to signify that this was a Royal Army, she and Mortimer advanced towards Bury St Edmunds and into England.

Edward was in London at the Tower, with Despenser and Hugh's father. Edward sent an order to his Barons and liegemen to raise an army in his defence. He called for 47,640 men-at-arms, an immense force, that he might oppose Isabella and her small force of no more than 1,500 infantry. They refused to comply. Instead the majority of Barons, Bishops, Clergy and common people turned against Edward. They included the merchants and citizens of London, which was decisive. On October 2nd Edward fled from London, heading west to the security of Despenser's Welsh territories, and his stronghold Caerphilly Castle. With him went both Despensers, the Earls of Arundel and Surrey, his Chancellor Robert Baldock, a small force of archers, some clerks, and a treasure chest of £29,000 in gold coin (perhaps some £80 million today). By the 14th October they had reached Tintern Abbey on the river Wye within the Welsh Marches. Isabella and Mortimer, meantime, had entered London and there she again publicly proclaimed that her intentions were solely towards the Despensers, not the king. She reached Wallingford, west of London in Oxfordshire, on October 14th. Once encamped Isabella issued a new Proclamation against the Despensers. It is a savage indictment of their greed and misrule. Once again she called for all the people in the realm to support her in destroying them.

The Proclamation of Queen Isabella, Wallingford, October 15th 1326.

We can understand Isabella more clearly, and of the mood of the times by reading her Proclamation in her own words (albeit in translation from her Norman French). She begins by reaffirming that *"...She had come to rescue the country, the Crown, and the Church from the evils of Hugh Despenser the Younger and his father..."*, also from the king's Treasurer William Stapledon and diverse others of the king's supporters. She declares, *"...Whereas it is well known that the state of the Holy Church and the kingdom of England is in many respects much tarnished and degraded by the bad advice and conspiracy of Hugh le Despenser; whereas through pride and greed to have power and dominion over all other people, he has usurped royal power against law and justice..."*. She continues that the Holy Church had been robbed of its goods, insulted and dishonoured. The Crown of England has been brought low, *"...through the disinheritation of our Lord the King and of his heirs..."* (a reference to the lands taken from her, intended for the her son the future King Edward III). She continues her proclamation with the charge that the Magnates of the realm had been dealt a shameful death, through the envy and wicked cruelty of Despenser. That widows and their children were orphaned and reduced to poverty and exile, and that the people of the land were now, *"...much hurt by many taxes and held to ransom by frequent unjust demands for money and by diverse other oppressions without any mercy...that she and others about her had been kept far from the company of the king through false suggestions and evil dealings of the aforesaid Hugh and Robert and their supporters..."*. Isabella concludes her Proclamation with a ringing declaration:

"We..are come to this land to raise up the state of the Holy Church and of the kingdom, and of the people of this land against such misdeeds and oppressions, and to safeguard and maintain, so far as we can, the honour and profit of the Holy Church and of our aforesaid Lord the King and the whole kingdom. For this reason we ask and pray you, for the common good of all and each of you individually, that you come to our help well and loyally, whenever the time and the place are right, and by whatever means lie within your power, so that the above matters may be speedily put right. For to be assured that we all, and all those in our company, intend to do nothing that does not redound to the honour and profit of the Holy Church and the whole Kingdom, as you will see in time, if it please God..."

The Proclamation ends: "Given at Wallingford on the 15th October in the 20th year of the reign of our very dear Lord the King" (Weir 2005).

Meantime on October 14th in Oxford, the Bishop of Hereford, Adam Orleton, delivered a sermon that took its text from Genesis, and compared Despenser "to the snake in the Garden of Eden". Despenser was, he said, "the seed of Satan who would be crushed by the Lady Isabella and her son the Prince". The next day he too was at Wallingford, where he delivered another sermon after Isabella had spoken. This time Orleton took his text from 2 Kings iv:19 - "My Head, my Head Acheth". He said that, "When the head of a kingdom becometh sick and diseased it must of necessity be taken off, without useless attempts to administer any other remedy". This was the first hint that Edward would be compelled to renounce his throne and be deposed. It was an astonishing thought.

The invading army continued towards Wales in pursuit of Edward and Despenser. By the 18th October the citizens of Bristol opened the city gates to Isabella and Mortimer. Hugh Despenser the Elder had taken refuge there in the castle. He tried to bargain for his life but failed. On 26th October the castle was stormed and Despenser taken. On the following day he was tried before a Tribunal of his peers, led by Sir William Trussell, a retainer of the executed Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. The tribunal sentenced Despenser to death, by being drawn through the city, hanged from a common gallows wearing a surcoat of his arms reversed, and then beheaded. The sentence was carried out immediately.

Edward, Despenser the Younger and their retinue had, meantime, sailed by boat from Chepstow on October 21st and landed in Cardiff on October 26th. From there they travelled to Caerphilly Castle. On October 31st the castle household servants deserted, leaving Edward with only Hugh Despenser, Robert Baldock and a small handful of men-at-arms. Isabella and Mortimer deputed Henry, Earl of Lancaster to capture them. On 16th November Edward and Despenser were betrayed and caught in open country near to Neath. The retained men-at-arms were released. Lancaster took Edward to Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire where he was imprisoned. Despenser, Baldock, and Despenser's vassal Simon de Reading were taken to the Queen at Hereford, for trial on charges of high treason and inevitable execution. So the wheel of fortune turned again.



*Fig 19: Queen Isabella, Sir Roger Mortimer and her army, encamped at the gates of Hereford
November 1326.
Lydgate. The British Library.*



Fig 19: The execution of Hugh Despenser the Younger, Hereford, November 26th 1326.
From Jean Froissart "Chroniques"

Bibliothèque Nationale de France. MS FR 26443 f.vi

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Traitor! Tyrant! Renegade!

A Tribunal composed of the same Barons and Lords that had tried Despenser the Elder at Bristol was reconvened. Hugh Despenser the Younger was not allowed to speak in his defence, as no more had Thomas of Lancaster in 1322. The tribunal was again led by Sir William Trussell. Despenser was adjudged to be a traitor, a tyrant and an enemy of the realm. Trussell read aloud the list of crimes Despenser was accused of. The judgement handed down is detailed and long. It makes compelling reading because, as with Isabella's Proclamation of Wallingford, there is no better way of hearing how things were argued and understanding the mood of the time. The charges against Despenser are similar to those in Isabella's speech, but it is the force of their anger and the eloquence of the language that is compelling. I have taken the translations from the original Norman-French into modern English from Mortimer (2003) and Warner (2008).

The Judgement

The text in the original French begins, "Hughe le despenser en parlement nostre seigneur le Roi Edward qui ore est tenu a Westmontre Lan de son regne xvme...". *"Hugh le despenser in the parliament of our lord King Edward who now is, held at Westminster in the fifteenth year of his reign (i.e. August 1321) by investigation of the prelates, earls, barons and all the community of the realm, it was found to be well known that your father and you Hugh were traitors and enemies of the realm, for which cause, by the assent and the command of our lord the king and all the baronage, your father, and you Hugh, were exiled from the realm never to return..."*. The indictment continues that Despenser was guilty of ignoring the banishment and returning to the realm and appearing at the royal court, without the permission of Parliament. Whilst absent he was accused *"...of piracy and robbing two great ships (dromonds) of goods to the value of £60,000, to the great dishonour of the king and the realm, and to the great peril of the merchants who often visit foreign countries..."*. Then he, Hugh, approached the king, and caused him to ride in arms against the peers of the realm and others of his faithful liegemen, *"...to destroy and disinherit them contrary to Magna Carta and the Ordinances..."*. By seizing royal power and riding in force and in arms, and with his father and their adherents he, *"...feloniously robbed the good men of the realm. With Andrew Harclay and other traitors, your adherents, you had the good Earl of Hereford and Sir William Sully and Sir Roger Burghfield feloniously and maliciously murdered..."*. Trussell then accused Despenser of illegally taking royal power, and seizing Thomas, *"...the good Earl of Lancaster, cousin of the king...and had him falsely imprisoned and robbed, and in his own hall in his own castle, by your royal power which you had seized from our lord the king, had him judged by a false record, contrary to law and Magna Carta and also without response, and you had him martyred and murdered by hard and piteous death...and this could not sate you...you had his barons and*

knights condemned to death by drawing and hanging...you shamefully hanged them without mercy...". Trussell then names eighteen barons and knights who were put to death. Trussell continues that *"...many other magnates you had sent to hard prison, to murder them without cause, for covetousness of their lands..."*. These men included Lord Mortimer of Chirk, Sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore his nephew, and Sir Hugh de Audley, Mortimer's nephew and Despenser's own brother-in-law. *"...Great Ladies, wives of these lords and their children, you kept in prison and orphaned. And after the deaths of the barons you pursued widowed Ladies such as my Lady Baret, and as a tyrant you had her beaten by your ribalds and shamefully had her arms and legs broken, against the Order of Chivalry and contrary to Law and Reason, by which good Lady is forever driven mad and lost..."*. Many other similar people, *"...who should have been Ladies of Great Honour..."* he was accused of compelling to follow the Court on foot, in poverty, without pity, without mercy, *"...and every day they were held in such great ignominy that God by his Mercy sent our Good and Gracious Lady (i.e. Isabella) and her son (i.e. the future Edward III) and the good men who have come in their company to the land, by which the realm is delivered..."*.

There is more to come. Trussell continues with the allegation that Despenser, after having executed Thomas of Lancaster, persuaded the king to battle with the Scots, where *"...20,000 of the king's people...died piteously..."*. On returning to England, said Trussell, Despenser along with his father and Baldock, *"...counselled our lord the king to leave my Lady the Queen in peril of her person, in the Priory of Tynemouth in Northumberland..."*. Edward had indeed fled the battle, abandoned Isabella and her ladies-in-waiting, and hid upon Blackhow Moor. Isabella escaped with the help of her handmaidens by sea, and might have been lost, *"...if God had not sent her deliverance by sea, thereby saving her from danger to her life and saving her honour, in such great grief of heart and body that no good lady of her estate and nobility should have at any time..."*. The Judgement continues with further serious accusations: that by seizing royal power Despenser destroyed the privileges of the Church, of robbing the prelates of Hereford, Lincoln, Ely and Norwich of their goods, horses, plate and baggage. He seized their lands, *"...and also plundered the Holy Church as a false Christian, renegade and traitor against God himself..."*. Trussell then proceeded to secular matters and laid further serious charges, accusing Despenser that he falsely and treacherously, *"...counselled our lord the king to give your father the Earldom of Winchester and the Earldom of Carlisle to Andrew Harclay a notorious traitor and criminal, and to you Hugh the land of Canteruaure and other lands belonging to the Crown. And also Hugh, you, your father and Robert Baldock had my Lady the Queen ousted from her lands, which were given and assigned to her by our lord the king, and set her on a journey (to France in March 1325) meanly, against the dignity of her highness and her estate...as a false and disloyal traitor you daily abetted and procured discord between our lord the king and herself..."*. Yet further charges were laid, before Trussell concluded with the charge that when the news came that Isabella, her son Edward, and Mortimer were returned to England with a small force, *"...you made our lord the king by your treacherous counsel remove himself from them, and led him out of the kingdom in great peril of his person...taking with them the Great Seal of the kingdom and treasure of the realm..."*.

The Judgement.

Ending his speech, Trussell issues this ringing condemnation of Hugh Despenser:

"Hugh, as a traitor you are found, and as such are judged by all the good people of the realm, great and small, rich and poor. By common assent you are found as a thief and a criminal, and for this you will be hanged.

And because you are found a traitor, you will be drawn and quartered, and the pieces of your body sent throughout the the realm.

And because you were exiled by our lord the king and by common assent returned to the court without authorisation, you will be beheaded.

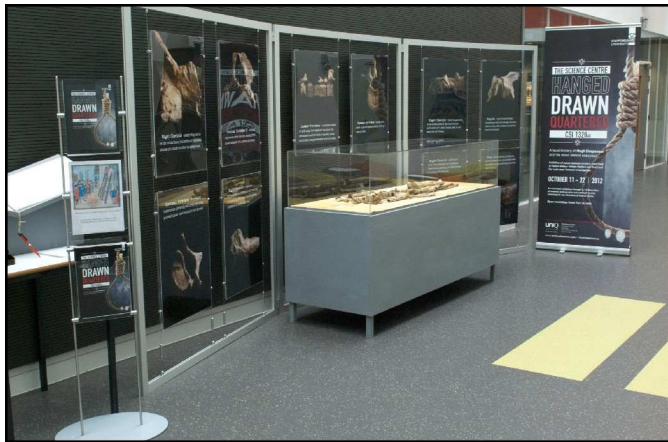
And because you were always disloyal and procured discord between our Lord the King and our very honourable Lady the Queen, you will be disembowelled and then they will be burned.

Go to meet your Fate ! Traitor! Tyrant ! Renegade! Go to receive your own justice! Traitor! Evil Man! Criminal!

Execution.

Despenser was roped behind four horses and drawn through the city of Hereford to the walls of his own castle. There a gallows some 50 feet high had been erected with a fire burning at its foot. A noose was placed around his neck and he was pulled up high on the gallows for all the people to see. Hanging by the neck but still conscious, a ladder was placed alongside him and a man climbed up. He first emasculated Despenser and threw his genitals into the fire. Then he sliced open his abdomen and pulling out his entrails cut them free, and threw them into the fire. Finally he cut out the heart and threw that into the fire also (*fig: 19*). The body was lowered and laid upon a table where his head was cut off and raised high "to a chorus of cheers". The body was cut into quarters (*fig:18*). The head was parboiled and sent to London to be displayed on a pikestaff set up on London Bridge. The sections of the body were sent out to the kingdom and displayed above the city gates of York, Newcastle, Dover and Bristol.

As Mortimer observes, "Justice was very visibly and viscerally done" (Mortimer 2003 p162).



Figs 20 and 21. The Exhibition 'Hanged, Drawn, Quartered: CSI 1326 a.d.'

Coda.

Exhibition: *Hanged, Drawn Quartered: CSI 1326 a.d*

The Science Centre, Staffordshire University, UK.

October 14th - November 14th 2012.

Planned and curated by Professor John Cassella, Department of Forensic Science, and Mrs Sue Lawton, Marketing Officer, Staffordshire University, a selection of the photographs made by R.G.Brown for this Case Study and for the HEA/JISC Research Project: *HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project*, was exhibited to the public at the opening of the new Science Centre, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, in October and November 2012. The exhibition included the original skeleton, HA16, excavated from Hulton Abbey. The digital prints were made by Mr David Mullany from the original RAW files ,and technical assistance was given by Miss Liz Deakin, Department of Forensic Science. I am grateful and thank them all for producing a superb exhibition.

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Photography as process, documentary photographing as discourse.

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SUMMARY

Documentary Photography, as I am writing about it here, I understand as a praxis and phronesis for visualising the object of the social sciences; a reflexive process of thoughtful and ethical social interaction whose value combines history, observation and aesthetics in a discourse over time.

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Recent discussions about Photography frequently concentrate on two primary perspectives. As a medium of illustration and source of data in a complex of sociological methods and as a visualising text, often made by others, to be read, analysed and evaluated (Banks 2007; Rose 2001/2006). Both perspectives assume that photographs offer a description of knowledge as data and a correspondence to an empirical truth as evidence. Neither perspective offers insight into the social inter-action, interpretation and reflexive process of making documentary photography. Yet there is much to be learned from doing so and in referring to recent comments about this weakness by Becker and Banks, I am making this my starting point for discussion (Becker 1994; Banks ibid).

The essay focuses on the activity of photographing, philosophical hermeneutics and ethnographic narrative. The hermeneutic activity and process of making documentary photographs of sociological value. On what Maynard refers to as the process of thinking and visualising through the medium of photography, Rorty as a hermeneutic of edification and Ricoeur as a hermeneutic of dialectical discourse, tacit knowledge, meaningful action and indirect description, comprehended in a move from explaining to understanding social worlds of inherent complexity. A re-describing of reality that I descriptive, sensory, affective and aesthetic and one not accessible to direct description alone. A visual equivalent to a fixing inscription by writing (Maynard 2000; Morin 2007; Ricoeur 1991/2007; Rorty 2009).

Whilst this essay is not in any sense an instruction manual for a meta-narrative of documentary photography practice I shall refer to the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, the five-fold aesthetic of photography devised by the art historian John Szarkowski and to published observations from documentary photographers David Hurn and Henri Cartier-Bresson on how they think through their practices, offered here as thoughtful and pragmatic guides to broadening our understanding.

The essay is illustrated with examples of my past work and two case studies from current work (Appendix) as examples of a continuum of documentary practice running from an ethnography of identity to a visualisation of archaeology where empirical observation and aesthetics are indivisible to the interpretation.

1. Introduction: *Photographing*.

The art-science genre of documentary photography continues to offer a powerful visual means of combining phenomenological description with hermeneutic understanding to visual social science methodology. As single images but most especially when sequenced into an extended narrative, the visualisations made can act as a complement to and mediation of written, spoken or performed ethnographies; or they can stand alone as visualised ethnographic essays. By drawing attention to the process of making photographs, *photographing*, I am drawing attention to the subtle inter-play of observation, tacit knowledge, new knowledge and aesthetics in their making. To not only what is being described visually but to the manner of their visualisation. As Ruskin put it many years ago and Denning more recently, that in their manner of making of observations, their rhetorical poetics and historicised performance documentary narratives are a mutual dependency of 'Form and Mental Expression' for capturing the rhythms of daily life of a greater value than mere recording and illustration (Denning 1995; Ruskin 1853). Stills documentary visualisations are an empirical asset and contribution to theoretical and methodological clarification in the social sciences (Hogel 1997).

1.1 The question is how to maintain a sense of action, the activity of making, as meaningful in the process of photographing in the formation of ethnographic narratives whilst being able to grasp the practice critically. Ulin points to a tension between a human agency and the structural constraints imposed by the circumstances in which it is operating that connects the formal properties of a text, or visual narrative in my case, to the conditions of its generation (Ulin 1992). The question in turn connects to mid-C20th philosophical hermeneutics and a shift from the epistemological question, " *How to read ?* " to the ontological question of " *How do we communicate at all ?* ". It is a discussion that Ricoeur develops as a conflict of interpretations through a move away from a semiotic

concern with structures of saying to a hermeneutic understanding of the manner of what is being said and their discourse (Ricoeur 1974; 1991). I discuss this further.

1.2 The genre of Documentary Photography is alive and well. An art-science, creative process and a powerful visual means of inter-acting with people, the rhythms and complexities of their lives that is capable of embedding '*numerous social meanings, contexts and institutions*', to borrow from Baetens excellent recent appraisal (Baetens 2009, p93-p96). Surprising, perhaps, that this should be so despite the fierce criticisms of documentary photography by the proponents of critical theory in the 1970s and 1980s who, in deconstructing the practice, argued that humanist documentary photography such as that to be seen in Steichen's 1955 '*Family of Man*' exhibition¹ was essentially an example of false consciousness, imperialistic and self serving (Solomon-Godeau 1991); despite its' more recent elevation to a supposedly higher status as an art form of subjective self expression albeit constrained to a post-modern, post-structuralist art historical discourse (Dexter and Weski 2003); and despite the predicted epistemological end-game to the debates about reality, truth and falsehood of the photographic image in a digital technological environment (Ritchin 2009). Arguable these are all closed theoretical models that "*have omitted significant aspects of our humanness...that fail to address the complexity of why people photograph*" (Noble 2010). Langford has recently commented that the predicted closure has not occurred. Rejecting the cynical she writes that "*Instead...we see signs of persistent faith in photographic evidence, however fragmented, pixellated or otherwise mediated...*". Faith in an appeal to the authority of the documentary photograph as an authentic inscription of a reality and response to the brute facticity of life (Langford 2009, p165; Savedoff 2008).

1.3 The enduring strength of documentary photography lies in the strength of it being a genre rather than a set of prescriptive doctrines. It is a mutable and pluralist mode of discourse within which to work that links together tacit knowledge, observational and empirical content to the sensory aesthetic poetics of their performance in ways that can create levels of expectation, meaning,

¹ Edward Steichen (ed) 1955 *The Family of Man* New York. The Museum of Modern Art

interpretation and understanding beyond that of mere description (Bate 2009). As Ruskin found to his pleasure when discussing the Nature of the Gothic, there is plenty of room for innovation and creative thinking in documentary practice. Yet the results are recognisably of the genre and a Kantian idea of reason expressed in ethnographic narratives of complex thought, depth and subtlety whose articulation can achieve an horizon of insightful understanding approaching that which Ricoeur, for example, sought to achieve in his studies of the hermeneutics of language and discourses of text, time and narrative (Ricoeur 1984-88). A mode of thought and practice about the photographing, prosody and sequencing of images to which Morin's useful metaphor of inscribing complex social meanings and behaviour can apply. Morin writes of the complexities of human life and describing them as being a construction in movement, one that transforms in its very movement the constitutive elements that form it (Morin 2007). To continue with Morin's musical metaphor for a moment, I often think of narrative documentary as being similar to the fugue, a marriage of precision and passion and a technique rather than a fixed form where the sequence of images can state a theme, a response, a theme, another response and so on with photographs working together as variation succeeds variation in a sequence of relational progression, to build an increasingly complex tapestry of the subject elements and an expression of reason (see, for example, W.Eugene Smith 1975: *Minamata*; James Ravilious 2007: *An English Eye*). As Gombrich has written "*...concentration on the physiognomic properties of sights and sounds (i.e: Signs - my insertion)..will never yield a theory of artistic expression unless it is coupled with a clear awareness of the structural conditions of communication...the artist...will select from his palette...from among those available that to his mind is most like the emotion he wishes to represent. The more we know of his palette, the more likely we are to appreciate his choice.*" (Gombrich 1963 p62-63). Thus we can conceive the written, the spoken and the visual modes of representation as a complementary triad that enable us to gather empirical data, organise, structure, interpret and analyse it; that in certain areas overlap, such as combining text with images, images with sound and haptic performances, but in others remain discrete and separate in their individual modes of discourse and inscription. (see, for example, Coover 2004 and the use of

hypertext)². Howard Becker in an *Afterword* to Knowles and Sweetman's thoughtful collection of essays, *Picturing the Social Landscape* writes of "...the need to find ways of using visual imagery that will be as natural and acceptable...as other forms of data..." and continues that, "...many people who work with visual materials have not realised that there are real skills involved and that you have to learn them, practise them and keep them in mind as you do your research and prepare it for public presentation...many people have failed to master the mechanics of writing clearly...and, similarly, most people do not know how to make a visual image that communicates clearly what's to be said...and certainly do not know how to deliberately control the many aspects of such images." (Becker 2004. p195; Knowles and Sweetman 2004).

Strong words and he concludes on this theme that whilst there are good examples within visual social science, he nonetheless continues that, "...we'd do well to look also at the work of photographers who never pretended to be social scientists but who we would do well to claim as our own." citing Robert Frank and Walker Evans, "...with a lot of work yet to do..." (Becker p196-197 *ibid*). Hogel has commented that until very recently anthropological understanding and use of documentary photography remained to a large extent dominated by nineteenth century ideas of realism with film or digital technologies 'revered' as clear, precise and undistorted methods of gathering data for subsequent reading and analysis. Simple mirrors to the world without an analytical potential or aesthetic dimension of meaning (Hogel 1998 *ibid*). A conception in which interpretation and aesthetics seem often to be treated as synonyms for something artificial and added that corrupts the integrity of their descriptive and information value rather than being qualities that are implicit in experience and indissolubly integrated in the authoring and receiving of photographic images. An equal music of rationality and emotion in their making, understanding and appreciation rooted in our pragmatic experience of everyday life and humanity (Dewey 1934).

² Sadly perhaps the visual has a dynamic range of expression of about an octave because of its inherent and limiting semantic uncertainties and lack of syntax unlike the written text. Limitations that perhaps suggest a smaller scale of composition such as the essay is its' natural form.

Progress has been made in the years since Becker and Hogel published their articles. Baetens remarks that photography research has become inter-disciplinary and hybrid, incorporating and then breaking the constraints of an art historical perspective but ineluctably drawn towards issues of rhetoric, aesthetics and "*questions of the pragmatic influence exerted on a non-passive audience by considerations...which some may call beauty*". A move that crucially sees a shift in concern from photography as an object of picture *taking* to the appreciation of photography as a socially constructed practice of picture *making* and points to a useful distinction to be made between media theory and medium theory in understanding this (Baetens *ibid* p 94 - 95). Pink and Edwards have, in the interim, pointed towards concerns with photography in an anthropological context: to questions of inter-subjectivity, the alleged fragmenting nature of photographs, the similarity of this with fieldwork practice and to the materiality of the medium. All of which are process related observations suggesting possible lines of development to be further worked on. Developments that allow for the recognition of affective, sensory and aesthetic subjectivities to understanding that are rooted in the experience of the aesthetic in everyday life and a category re-configuration that makes the photographic discourse more truthful to the complex dimensions of the ethnographic object, enriching our understanding of it in meaningful ways. (Dewey 1934 *ibid*; Edwards 1997; Pink 2004; Saito 2007). Yet for all this, in talking about the business of making photographs in the field, Banks comments that whilst there are useful guides such as Wright's *The Photography Handbook* (Wright 2007) there is nothing published 'quite equivalent for still photography' as Barbash and Taylor's *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* (Banks 2007 *ibid* p124; Barbash & Taylor 1997).

2. Photography or Photographing?

To talk in terms of Photography is too abstract a category for so hybrid a medium and conceptually not helpful to us. The category is too broad to be meaningful and passive in its' spectator orientation as Elkins *et al* have recently discussed (Elkins 2007). I am talking in terms of *Photographing* and the specific and limited photographic genre of Documentary Photography: a social activity and reflexive process of making, interpretation and discourse of thinking about effective visualisations of social life

and their reception by varieties of other people and circumstances; a means and not an end whose instrumentality expands the domain of our understanding. This is an intending sociological action that I understand as an ethical Aristotelian praxis and phronesis directed towards interpreting cultural circumstances in ways that are meaningful and inscribing human beings actively living their lives in relation to each other and their cultural worlds, natural environments and their history in webs of semantic understandings.

2.1 In speaking of *photographing* I am also drawing attention to the distinction between merely seeing and incisive looking; and to the nature, the prosody of the visual frameworks of understanding being used in their inscription. Frameworks that mediate, shape and constrain our capacity to experience, interpret, understand and communicate intelligibly to others and that reciprocally mediate their reception. We tend to think of seeing and looking as synonymous but they are not. Seeing is to be aware in a disinterested way. Looking is to scrutinise, to be fully engaged with the detail and minutiae of the object. A distinction akin perhaps to Barthes' *studium* and *punctum* dichotomy. Both seeing and looking are not immediately obvious and both are about perception and questioning the nature of our perceptions (Elkins 1999). Documentary photographing is very much about looking. Scrutinising the object of the enquiry with all senses alert to its visual possibilities, moods and qualities. In this it has a great deal in common with anthropological fieldwork and participating observation. Both have the quality of immediacy and presence yet both can only come to full realisation over an extended period of time and deepening understandings of the object of enquiry.

3. Photographing as a hermeneutic discourse.

Gombrich writes, "*No artist is worth his salt who cannot keep the various dimensions of his language apart and use them for different articulations.*" (Gombrich p65 *ibid*). The significant question to be answered in documentary photographing is "*How?*". It is not only the choice of subject matter but *how* am I going to make photographs of it? Music is so much more than merely playing the notes so photographing is more than pointing the camera with all the settings on automatic.

3.1 Hermeneutic philosophy has been largely overlooked as an idea of reason that adds unity and coherence to our experience and as a guide to our thinking in discussions of photography. Ricoeur in his analysis of the text makes the crucial distinction between the speech act of *saying*, which is a dialogue, with what is *said*, which is the enunciation of the speaking transposed to writing. What we write, he says, is the noema of speaking, the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event (Ricoeur 1991 p146-147). Writing captures the fleeting event that appears and disappears in speech. In a similar way Photographing seeks to fix visually the fleeting and transient in the swirl of events. But it also seeks to capture and describe the event as event, exhibiting connections and distinctions which have hitherto lain hidden or cannot be as well expressed in writing.

3.2 The answers to the question '*How*' to make the photographs that fulfil their intention is by no means obvious although we have the habit of thinking photography is so easy as to be self evident. Simply put the camera on automatic and take a picture. What could be easier ? Ulin and Gombrich each in their distinctive ways point to a tension between human agency and the contingency of the circumstances under which work is necessarily performed. In using hermeneutic thinking to help conceptualise and evaluate this I am drawing most particularly on the work in hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur who writes of the task of hermeneutics as being to resolve an aporia and perceived opposition between explanation and understanding, that is between an epistemological mode of knowing and an ontological understanding as a way of being and meaningful social behaviour (Ricoeur 1991/2007 p 53-74). Hermeneutics in relation to documentary photographing should be viewed as a regulative idea, rather than constitutive, adding meaning, unity and coherence to our experience. A help and guide our thinking and understanding I argue

3.3 Ricoeur defines hermeneutics as being the rules required for the interpretation of written documents. In his development of hermeneutics to the humanities and social sciences he distinguishes between a Weberian *verstehen* as a generalised comprehension and understanding and the concept of *auslegung* as stated by Dilthey. *Auslegung* being an interpretation and exegesis that implies something

more specific, a limited category of signs fixed by writing in documents and in monuments that entail a fixation “...*similar to writing...*”. Ricoeur’s stated hypothesis is that the human sciences (in which are included anthropology and sociology) may also be said to be hermeneutical because they raise similar problems in their interpretation as are raised in the interpretation of written and spoken texts. He argues that the object of the human sciences display some of the features of a text as a text, and the methodology of their interpretation develops similar procedures as those of *auslegung* or text interpretation (Ricoeur 1991 p 144-145).

I am suggesting that documentary photography when used as a medium of inscription and method of analysis (i.e *photographing*) in the social sciences displays features that are similar to those in writing. Especially so in the construction of linked sequences of photographs. Further that photographing as the action of inscription is a visualising discourse of a regulative equivalence enabling us the adoption of Ricoeur’s assertion that it is in discourse that language is either written or spoken. Ricoeur tells us that discourse, as he defines the category, is “...*language-event or linguistic usage...*” and the counterpart of what linguists call language systems or linguistic codes (*ibid* p145). Because language is capable of multiple semiosis that the word alone cannot encompass he shifts the unit of analysis from the semiotic word (sign) to the sentence as the base unit of discourse because it is better able to capture a plurality of multiple meanings. Therefore he says, “...*it is the linguistics of the sentence which supports the theory of speech as an event...*” (*ibid*). Without getting ahead of myself, I shall say here that for my purposes of analysis I regard the single photograph as the visual equivalent to the sentence in language.

3.4: Discourse.

Ricoeur proposes that discourse has four distinctive traits. First, discourse is always realised temporally and in the present (language is a-temporal and virtual). Second, discourse refers back to a speaker. It has a complex set of indicators that amount to an instance of discourse (unlike language which lacks a subject in the sense of “who is speaking?”). Third, discourse is always about something, it refers to a world that it claims to describe, to express or to represent (language signs refer only to

other signs within the same system). Only in discourse is the symbolic function of language actualised. Fourth, in discourse all messages are exchanged. Discourse alone has a world that includes another, an interlocutor that is being addressed (language is only the condition for communication, for which it provides codes), thus we arrive at the category of speech as an event (*ibid* p145-146).

He continues with a problem, the distinction between spoken and written language. Examining how these four traits are present in spoken and written language he realises there is a fundamental difference between the two modes of language. Speech is a transient fleeting event, which is why there is a problem in fixing it, of inscribing it. What we want to fix, he says, is what disappears. Referring to Plato's *Phaedrus* it is writing, the *grammata* of external marks that solves the problem. Writing "*is discourse's destination...*" Ricoeur says. Writing fixes the fleeting event of speech that would otherwise disappear. That same fleeting reality when all the faculties converge into "*that moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy*" for Cartier-Bresson in photography (Henri Cartier-Bresson 1999 p16). Ricoeur continues by asking "*...what in effect does writing fix?*". In answer he proposes that writing does not inscribe the event of speaking but the "*said*" of speaking. Here is our bridge between a hermeneutics of writing and a hermeneutics of photographing and visualisation in documentary photography. The "*said*" of speaking is, Ricoeur contends, the intentional exteriorisation of discourse thanks to which the saying, *sage*, wants to become the enunciation, *aus-sage*. For writing this means the written text. For documentary photographing this means the visualised narrative. In short, he says, what we write is the meaning of the speech event. Speech itself insofar as it is said (*ibid* p146).

3.5: Speech Act

Drawing on the theories of the speech act to be found in the work of Austin and Searle, Ricoeur deepens his analysis. A speech act, or the act of speaking has, according to Austin and Searle three levels:

- 1) The Propositional or Locutionary: the act of saying. (Inscription)
- 2) The Illocutionary act: that which we do in saying. (Inspiration)
- 3) The Perlocutionary act: what we do by saying. (Aspiration)

Unwrapping these categories Ricoeur reveals their implications which are that (a) the Locutionary act is fixed in the sentence. The sentence thus becomes a propositional utterance with descriptive content that because of its sign structure can be identified and re-identified. (b) The Illocutionary is less completely inscribed in grammar, it dwells on the expressive aspects of the speech act that calls on prosody to articulate and inspire what could not otherwise be known. (c) The Perlocutionary is the least inscribable aspect. The Perlocutionary is the level of discourse as stimulus and aspiration; it acts upon the emotions, imagination and affective dispositions of people, typically through metaphor. Thus to fully understand the meaning of a speech act it is necessary to understand all three rational and aesthetic aspects of language where they are codified and gathered into paradigms that can be identified and re-identified as having the same meaning.

When transposed to writing the sentence is a diverse indicator of subjective factors such as the personality of the speaker Ricoeur states. This too is an assertion also frequently made about photography. But there is a further problem because the subjective author and the written text are dissociated. The author's intention and the meaning of the text no longer necessarily coincide. Thus, *"...the dissociation of verbal meaning of the text and the mental intention is what is really at stake in the inscription of discourse..."* says Ricoeur and interpretation is the only recourse we have to recover the meaning (*ibid* p147-148). Finally discourse is what refers to a world, it cannot fail to be about something. *"Only man has world.."* he says, a text has only a situation. The text has an ostensive reference but people have an ensemble of references, tacit knowledge, that are opened up by the text. People encountering a text are an audience that constitutes itself and one that utilises their prior knowledge. Thus, he concludes, to understand a written text is at the same time to understand something of ourselves and a new dimension to Self being-in-the-world. A Heideggerian *project* of discourse as projecting-a-world which is, he argues, its' justification as a social action: to establish the

relation of man to the world. Discourse is addressed to someone. This is the foundation of communication, Ricoeur writes, universal in its address as meaningfully oriented behaviour (*ibid* p148-150).

3.6 I am suggesting that documentary photographing in a social science context can be found to share significant similarities and characteristics in its discourse with Ricoeur's three-fold delineation of the written text. The photographs have locutionary description, illocutionary affects and perlocutionary aesthetics that arouse and fire the imagination. Both are evidence of a somebody saying something about something to a somebody. Ricoeur's analysis of the hermeneutics of discourse gives us a fresh understanding of the way in which documentary photographing can be critically understood to operate and how it does so. The reflexive participation of the observer is recognisable in the Locutionary manner by which the observation is described and visualised in photographs, what Wright has called the primary message (Wright 2007). Ricoeur calls this the reference, a literal description and in his nomenclature, *mimesis*₁. The Illocutionary he calls the intentional sense of the inscription. A message and discourse that reveals aspects, qualities and values of a reality that he categorises *mimesis*₂. The Perlocutionary he calls the indirect reference, re-describing a reality inaccessible to direct description and categorises *mimesis*₃. These different aspects become apparent through the skill (*phronesis*) with which we photograph and the manner in which the primary and lateral messages that are descriptive, explanatory, affective, sensory, revealing values that stimulate the imagination are communicated that in their total, "...make the world one that can be inhabited" (Ricoeur *ibid*).

Documentary photographing is a skill and no less a skill to be learned than the skill of writing. It is a practical way of thinking about the complexity of life that refuses the photography to be reduced and polarised as either science or art but in form and mental expression is dependent on both (Morin 2007; Ruskin 1853).

4. Photographing as practice.

"...if I make a judgement it can only be on a psychological or sociological level...in order to give meaning to the world one has to feel oneself involved in what one frames through the viewfinder. This attitude requires concentration, a discipline of mind, sensitivity, and a sense of geometry...by an economy of means...one arrives at simplicity of expression. One must always take photographs with the greatest respect for the subject and for oneself." (Henri Cartier-Bresson 1999).

Photographing is about looking and imaginatively evoking worlds visually. For myself I reject the collapsing of documentary photography into Art and a mere art form as the only worthwhile form. It is entirely capable of standing on its own feet in a sociological context as method and analysis and to categorise it wholesale as Art and therefore 'worthy' is singularly unhelpful. As Paul Newman did not quite say, why eat hamburger when you are already eating fillet steak?

As with the written word we can do it well or we can do it half heartedly or even misleadingly. This places considerable responsibility on the photographer and demands from them other skills in terms of prior knowledge and understanding; perception and sensitivity to current and unfolding events; an ability to build rapport and good working relations with other people; integrity and humility in recognition of the ethical responsibilities to the people, their lives and circumstances that they are allowing to be photographed, often intimately. To this we can then add the skills needed in a confident marshalling and selection of the visualising technologies and picture making techniques available; sensitivity to the structural and rhetorical tropes possible in the making of the photographs and integrity in the building of the sequence of images into a satisfactory and authentic narrative. None of this is specific to photography alone but would apply to a greater or lesser degree to film and video makers as it would to fieldworkers more concerned to write their fieldwork and data than render it visually. As Becker has pointed out, writing doesn't come easily!

There are some additional factors peculiar to both photography and film/video visualisation to be aware of Flusser reminds us. Flusser suggests there is a potential conflict of intentions between the users of camera based technologies and the intentions of the manufacturer of the equipment such that the camera may dictate to an uncomfortable extent what is possible and what it is not possible to record on the film or sensor (Flusser 2000/2007). To my mind it simply means recognising the limitations of the medium and working within them.

4.1 In 1964 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, staged an exhibition of photographs called *The Photographer's Eye*. The exhibition was curated by the then Director of Photography, John Szarkowski, against a background that sought to establish Photography as a sovereign fine art medium. Szarkowski published a book of the same name in 1966 based on the exhibition. The thesis of the book is to investigate why photographs look the way they do, to move our appreciation of them from a picture making process of synthesis to one of selection. Szarkowski argued that a study of the photographic form "...must consider the medium's *"fine art" tradition and its "functional" tradition as intimately interdependent aspects of a single history...*"(Szarkowski 1966/1980 *Introduction*). Szarkowski proposed five key considerations a photographer must decide on in the *"How to"* process of making photographs. In summary these are: 1) *The Thing* itself, the subject of the photograph. 2) *The Detail*, the small but significant and meaningful elements of the picture. 3) *The Frame*, the boundaries of the picture that determine what is included, what is excluded and what is hinted at lying on the edges and beyond the frame. It also is a significant element of the internal geometry of the picture and creating the illusion of space, of a foreground and background *gestalt*. 4) *Time*, when to press the shutter and what shutter speed to select for the inscription of movement or freezing motion. 5) *Vantage*, where to stand in relation to the subject, how close, how far, how low and how high, to one side or another. By such means suggested Szarkowski, pictures made with a mindless mechanical process could "...be made to produce pictures meaningful in human terms..." (*Introduction ibid*). Szarkowski is writing as a museum curator and photographic art historian. In seeking to identify what

made photography distinctive as a collectable art form he devised what amounts to an aesthetics of the medium that remains a thought provoking and influential text today.

4.2 David Hurn the long time member of the Magnum photo agency and former head of documentary photography at Newport, Gwent, and Bill Jay the writer and critic of photography have written an excellent book together that attempts to unravel the processes of "*how to think and act like a photographer*". (Bill Jay and David Hurn 2007). It is a distillation of common denominators and basic principles they have found in a life-time of their own and many other photographer's experience. Amongst the hundreds of books available that give advice on how-to-make-better pictures Jay and Hurn's is unique. The book is arranged as a Socratic dialogue of questions and answers so, for example, when Jay asks what is it that transforms a simple record photograph of the appearance of something into something of lasting merit, Hurn replies that it comes down to the choice of subject. The photographer must have an intense curiosity and not just a passing visual interest in the subject. A curiosity that leads to intense examination, reading, talking, researching, and not least many failed attempts at finding a satisfactory visualisation over a long period of time (*ibid* p48).

This sits well with fieldwork of course. It may sound trite to say it but photographing has to be worked at and a common mistake is to treat it as an add on, an afterthought. So put time aside to concentrate on making photographs, immerse yourself in photographing. It takes time, persistence and patience. Unlike working with formal or informal interview techniques, with listening and participating in conversations and the ebb and flow of the dialogue, or with observations and research that are going to be transcribed into spoken and above all written language in monographs and journal articles, photographing means looking for the visual. You are using a different part of the brain and a quite different mind set. You are making yourself alive to line, shape, form, colour, texture, patterning and configurations of elements and above all Light and the tone or mood of the photographs. James Ravilious frequently chose to shoot into the light, for example. The subject matter becomes backlit,

shadows are cast forward towards the viewer and the overall tone of the photographs of rural Devon farming communities is lyrical (Ravilious *ibid*).

4.3 Photographing, you are in control deciding where to stand and when to press the shutter release; how to draw the image on the film or sensor according to the ways in which different lens focal lengths render light at the camera focal plane, so long focal length telephotos compress perspective, limit depth of field and allow differential focus to be used to isolate a subject from its surroundings. Whereas short focal length wide angle lenses expand and even distort perspective, generate deep depth of field rendering foreground and background sharp. Different shutter speeds will impact on how movement is made apparent in the image (slow speed) or stopped in its tracks (fast speed). What ISO rating of film or sensor will be used? In making the crucial decisions about how to photograph something, a person, an event the photographer can choose which technology, which lens, the level of exposure, the shutter speed, the handling of contrast ratios and qualities of light, mood and atmosphere, the lens aperture, the depth of field and point of focus, whether to work in colour or black and white, the extent of post-production enhancement and manipulation of the image all grounded in a web of empirical references and significations. Not for nothing did Edward Steichen say that *"Photography is a medium of formidable contradictions. It is both ridiculously easy and almost impossibly difficult"*. So it comes as a relief that he also felt able to say with great conviction that photography, *"I believe...is potentially the best medium for explaining man to himself and his fellow man"* (Steichen 1967). All that is required is, as Hogel says, 'that we work seriously with the media' (Hogel *ibid* p 33).

5. Some Examples



Fig 1: Occidental Petroleum, Piper Alpha, Igniting the Flare stack. North Sea.

Oil rigs are noisy, fascinating and at times tedious places. In the early 1980s I was on the North Sea oil rig Piper Alpha. Soon after dawn I wandered the rig looking for interesting subject matter when I noticed a roustabout standing by the nozzle of the gas flare. When they burn the gas flare booms with noise. That morning it was quiet and there were no flames because he had been cleaning the burner of carbon deposits. The rig however was noisy and flexing with vibrations from the well drilling deck.

I watched in amazement as he reached into his pocket and taking out an ordinary cigarette lighter stretched an arm to the nozzle and lit the gas jet. It ignited and billowed and roared into flame. My camera was loaded with colour film, the lens focal length, settings and exposure already chosen because I had beforehand measured and evaluated the light and picture making possibilities of the early morning activities. But not this, I had no idea this is what happened. I managed to frame and shoot one exposure. Serendipity.



Fig 2: Fish filleting and process shed, Aberdeen.

When not on the rigs I was undertaking research and fieldwork for an ethnography of the North East of Scotland inshore fisheries for a post graduate degree. Then as now my ethics were humanist. I was steeped in the realist tradition, discourse and expectations of documentary photography being 35mm, available light, black and white, shot on Kodak Tri-X at 400 ISO or more. The rhetoric of this photograph was formed by these expectations and by the light of a single fluorescent strip light in the ceiling of the railway arch housing a small family business. It was very cold and steam drifted from the buckets of hot water that the working women and one man used to warm their hands frozen from filleting the cold, wet fish. I tried hard to catch that sense of a Dickensian atmosphere and relentless hard work processing the morning catch and sending it to market as fresh as possible. The aesthetic of grainy black and white photographs fitted that. Colour would not. The photographs were always intended to be sequenced into a photo-essay and visual narrative with text and resulted from many months work building personal relationships, gaining acceptance and developing an understanding of the complex social structure through which the fisheries were organised and operated. I had seen the same events in this and other similar fish houses for a number of weeks before photographing them, during which time I worked out my story line and my visual rhetorics through which to make the photographs.



Fig 3: Royal Doulton Plc, Anne, aerobrush figurine decorator.

In 2004-2005 I spent six months photographing the work force, plant and manufacturing processes of the Royal Doulton ceramics company in their last British factory at Nile Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. After years of decline and loss making the factory was to close, production shipped overseas and the brand name sold to the Wedgwood Group. I chose to work on 6cm x 7cm medium format cameras with colour negative film. I was intending as complete a record as possible for exhibition, publication and as a doctoral research case study, with high quality negatives and archival durability. I was very conscious that I was photographing history. For this reason I wanted great detail and clarity in the photographs. Lighting governed the aesthetics and mood of the photographs with a complex mixture of ambient daylight and fluorescent strip lighting which I controlled and softened by using on camera fill in flash.



Figure 4: Hugh le Despenser the Younger, 1326, executed for High Treason. Cervical vertebra C3 showing the inter-vertebral surface of the living bone where it has been sliced through by beheading.

My current work is with documentary visualisations of archaeological skeleton remains for an HEA/JISC funded research project producing photographs for a Forensic Archaeology and Forensic Science teaching and learning DVD (Cassella, Brown, Lewis and Lucking 2008). The skeletons have been excavated from Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire over a period of time (Klemperer and Boothroyd 2004). One unique skeleton has recently been identified as that of Hugh le Despenser the Younger, favourite of Edward 11, executed for high treason by being hanged, drawn and quartered in November 1326 at Hereford. The bones of the skeleton are scarred with axe and sword cut and chopping marks where the body was butchered into pieces and the head struck off. The intention was to produce clear and detailed images that can be used for teaching diagnostics of the pathology of perimortem trauma without the need to handle the fragile bones. Lighting and the aesthetic quality of the light is the key to this. Here I have used contre-jour lighting that produces glowing highlights, clearly defined shadow regions and three dimensional drawing of the bone surfaces and butchering cuts and fractures. So successful has this been that the research project is continuing with further photography of these and other archaeological specimens.

Documentary photography can readily span a range of intended methodologies in the social sciences as I have sought to show in these few examples. Common to all the different applications is an

appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of the photographing that far from corrupting the empirical content add immeasurably to our appreciation, understanding and interpretation of them.

APPENDIX

Case studies.

1. HASDiP: The Hulton Abbey Skeleton Digitisation Project.

HASDiP is an HEA/JISC funded research project to digitally photograph skeleton remains excavated from Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent in the recent past (Klemperer & Boothroyd, 2004). The purpose was to document the remains with as much aesthetic clarity and detail as possible to show their pathology. The photographs are to be used as a diagnostic teaching and learning aid in forensic science, forensic archaeology, forensic anthropology and other related fields. The final outcome has been published as a DVD for in class use, the intention being to remove the need to handle the very fragile remains (Cassella, Brown, Lewis & Lucking 2008).

Hulton Abbey is a minor medieval Cistercian monastery (AD1219-1538). One skeleton stood out labelled as HA16. The decapitated remains are heavily scarred with what were, on initial diagnosis, suggested to be the cut marks of battle injuries. A recent re-analysis by Dr Mary Lewis suggests the skeleton is of a male and well known political figure who had been executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered. Lewis contends the remains are those of Hugh le Despenser the Younger, executed for High Treason in November 1326 at Hereford on the orders of Queen Isabella, wife of Edward II. Lewis's analysis and the new photographs that I made are the first osteological description and visualisation of the lesions associated with this form of execution (Lewis 2008: *Antiquity* 82 : 315).



(fig 1: Froissart: The execution of Hugh le Despenser, Hereford, 1326).



(Fig 2: HA16 the surviving skeleton remains).

Hugh le Despenser was the Chamberlain and favourite courtier of Edward II and widely hated by his Queen, Isabella, the Barons, Bishops and population for exploiting his position of power and authority to enrich himself at their expense (Fryde 1979). When Queen Isabella and the Marcher Baron Sir Roger Mortimer invaded England in September 1326 to depose him from the throne, Despenser was chased, captured and taken to Hereford for trial and execution for high treason. He was sentenced to death by being publicly drawn, hanged, emasculated, eviscerated and beheaded whilst still conscious

and his body then quartered. The manner of execution being reserved only for high status individuals, carbon-dating of the bones and the absence of several parts of the body including the head all point to Despenser and if so then *"this is the first time such an execution victim has been identified"* says Lewis (*ibid*).



Fig 3: Cervical vertebra C3. This shows the moment of beheading. The spongy appearance of the inter-vertebral surface shows the living bone where the axe sliced through the flesh and fractured the neck vertebra.

The head was displayed on London Bridge and his quartered body parts sent to the four corners of the kingdom and displayed there to confirm his death. Significantly the body was not only quartered but cut into smaller sections by being halved below the rib cage and the spine cut vertically. The chop marks on the bones show that the butchering was crudely done. Despenser's widow, Eleanor, later petitioned Edward III for the return of his bones to be buried in his family mausoleum in Gloucester Cathedral but only the head, a thigh bone and a few vertebrae were returned to her. These are the bones missing from the Hulton Abbey skeleton. Hulton Abbey formed part of the estate of Hugh Audley, Despenser's brother-in-law and a Knight in Edward II's household. It is possible the family may have chosen to bury what remained of him there so save him from eternal purgatory.

As well as producing photographs of record the aesthetics of the lighting is crucial to the photographing.



Fig 4: Cervical vertebra C3: Another view of the same site of beheading.

I used a lighting technique known as contre-jour and macro levels of magnification of each specimen. The lighting places the source high and behind the subject. The effect is to create glowing highlights as the light reflects from surfaces and builds shadows that create texture and three dimensional form.



Fig 5: Lumbar vertebrae. The body was quartered and cut vertically down the lower spine from below the rib cage to the pelvis showing living bone surfaces.

Cuts, slices, chopping marks and stress fractures are all brought out in great detail and clarity as can be seen on the right clavicle where the arm was cut away at the shoulder (*fig.6*). Multiple cut marks are visible suggesting that the butchering was crude, hasty and difficult.



Fig 6: The right clavicle where the right arm was cut away at the shoulder. The bone shows as many as twelve cut lines, evidence of repeated slashing and the difficulty of cutting through the flesh and sinews.

The photographic techniques used have been so successful that further evidence of the peri-mortem trauma has been revealed by the photography that visual examinations had not. The research programme is continuing with quantitative laser 3-D scanning of the bones.



Fig 7: The thoracic section of the spine was also cut through vertically as the body was butchered

Together the qualitative photography and the quantitative laser scans will establish new national visualisation protocols for this type of documentation, new knowledge to science and open new understandings of medieval life and the highly theatrical performance of public execution by drawing, quartering and beheading.

2. Place, Space and Identity, Waterside South, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.



Fig 1: New housing along the Caldon canal where potbanks previously stood.

In 2007 I was awarded an Arts Council West Midlands/RENEW Regeneration North Staffordshire community arts commission to document an area of Stoke-on-Trent undergoing Pathfinder 1 regeneration. The area I chose is called Wellington traditionally and Waterside South in the regeneration scheme. It is an area of C19th terraced housing built for the people working in the paper mills and potbanks that lined the district to the south along the Caldon canal.



Fig 2: Mrs Lottie Hughes, 4th generation resident.

Up to four generations of people living in the district give it a vivid sense of self and identity, with many having lived there all their lives, marrying their neighbours, working in the same factories, sending their sons to war. Typical of these is Mrs Lottie Hughes who has lived all her life in the house she was born in and her parents and grandparents before her. Mrs Hughes home was recently demolished and she has been re-housed in a small bungalow development for the elderly.

I had three winter months in which to produce a documentary narrative and a public exhibition of the photography. The question was how to photograph something so transient as Identity. It seemed to me only possible through a mixture of portraits, events, places and interviews that could be used for captioning. I worked through the Resident's Association giving a presentation of my work and asking people to help me by giving me permission to photograph them and their homes.



Fig 2: Residents Association meeting with the Regeneration Agency.

Tensions were high because demolition was taking place, new housing being built, many older properties condemned but a lot of uncertainty of what was going to happen and when.



Fig 3: Former Paper mill and Victorian housing and new build housing, Cresswell Street.



Fig 4: Mr and Mrs Jeffries

Many, like Mr and Mrs Jeffries were happy to welcome me into their homes, others were not.

The older community was fracturing and with it a sense of self and identity that nonetheless people worked hard to maintain through the church, school and community centre organising luncheons, social activities and events such as the traditional children's Christmas lantern parade through the streets of the district.



Fig 5: The Christmas children's lantern parade through the district

North Staffordshire is famous for a local delicacy, the oatcake. This is a pancake of fermented wheat and oat flour. "The Hole in the Wall" is the last traditional shop selling from what used to be the front room of the house. The shop was to be demolished and it caused an outcry and became the focus for people's frustrations.



Fig 6: The Hole in the Wall oatcake shop



Fig 7: Glenn Fowler and the Oatcake Girls.

They did not like the changes being forced on them and the manner they were being carried out without, it was felt, sufficient and proper consultation.



Fig 8: Exhibition at the Community Centre

The photographs were exhibited in the district Community Centre and the church hall of the parish church, St Mary's. My work continues with documenting the changes and regeneration of Wellington and a book is planned for publication in late 2010.

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