



## King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1093/english/efw011](https://doi.org/10.1093/english/efw011)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Hutton, A. (2016). An English School for the Welfare State: Literature, Politics, and the University, 1932-1965. *ENGLISH*, 65(248), 3-34. <https://doi.org/10.1093/english/efw011>

### **Citing this paper**

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# AN ENGLISH SCHOOL FOR THE WELFARE STATE: LITERATURE, POLITICS, AND THE UNIVERSITY, 1932–1965<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Hutton\*

## *Abstract*

Whilst much of the recent focus on modern criticism and the teaching of English Literature in Britain have focused on the work of F.R. Leavis and *Scrutiny*, this article examines wider conceptions of the English School between the 1930s and 1960s in the figures of L.C. Knights, Bonamy Dobrée, F.W. Bateson, and David Daiches. From the radical political climate of the 1930s and 1940s, there emerged a ‘Social Democratic’ vision of English teaching within a number of British universities, which attempted to connect teaching and research to the idea that literature provided a remedy to political extremism and the ills of mass society. This vision stressed that the subject was necessary training to create democratic and humane citizens capable of administering and living in a modern welfare state society. The piecemeal reforms to particular departments and wider visions of Knights, Dobrée, Bateson, and Daiches influenced a generation of their pupils and subsequent academics and was instrumental in the creation of new English Departments during the 1960s.

## **Beyond *Scrutiny***

English literary criticism was, from its outset, animated by notions of the social relevance of literature. This characterized the 1921 Newbolt Report into

\* Correspondence to Alexander Hutton, King’s College London

<sup>1</sup> This article originated as a talk at the Cambridge Cultural History Seminar, drawing on several sections of my doctoral thesis and at the Institute of Education History of Education Seminar. I would like to thank my two anonymous reviewers and William Whyte for a stimulating conversation about mid-twentieth century university reforms. My especial thanks to Stefan Collini and Ariana Phillips who have read a number of drafts. I am also grateful to the generous assistance of various archivists at Kew Public Records Office; the Bodleian Library; Corpus Christi College, Oxford; The Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; Cambridge University Library; the Wren Library, Trinity College Cambridge; and Sheffield University Library Archives.

the teaching of English in schools and universities and the place of the subject in wider national life.<sup>2</sup> This was especially so during the 1930s, when critics preoccupied by the threat of fascism, communism, economic strife, and mass culture, suggested varying redemptive visions of society deriving from a belief in the cohesive power of literature. Whilst the responses of figures and journals such as T.S. Eliot and the *Criterion*, F.R. Leavis and *Scrutiny*, and various Marxist literary critics have been much discussed (notably in Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958)), less well known was the response from other English academics. This article discusses the development of left wing, socially democratic visions of the English School from the late 1930s through to the foundation of new English Departments in the early 1960s. I focus primarily on the careers of four critics based in universities, L.C. Knights, Bonamy Dobrée, F.W. Bateson, and David Daiches, who between them saw the reform of English Literature teaching in universities as a means to creating a socially responsible, and above all humane, elite capable of withstanding the pressures of an unthinking world dominated by fascism, capitalism, and content-less mass media.<sup>3</sup> University English schools were meant to train graduates capable of upholding the values of democratic thought, free from cant or propaganda, and of instilling humanistic values derived from the study of literature within a complex modern bureaucratic state. In short, they were literary critics for a welfare state era.

Particularly after 1945, these figures saw the necessity of educating an elite of English undergraduates who were capable of creating and running a state and society which promoted equality and freedom. This was a comparable view to the hope for social transformation through the pupils of Thomas Arnold at Rugby School in the 1830s or Benjamin Jowett and T.H. Green at Balliol College in the 1860s and 1870s (or, for that matter, those of Wilhelm von Humboldt in early nineteenth-century Prussia). As Jose Harris has described, it was the liberal left of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who sought the creation of a class of Platonic Guardians capable of reforming the state and society along idealist lines.<sup>4</sup> A parallel strand of thought within positivistic branches of natural and social sciences sought to

<sup>2</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Morris Dickstein, 'The Critic and Society, 1900-1950', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume vii: Modernism and the New Criticism* (henceforth *CHLC*), ed. by A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 322-76.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 94-5.

<sup>4</sup> Jose Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940', *Past and Present*, 135, (1992), 116-41. See also Stefan Collini, 'The Idea of "Character" in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), 29-50.

create experts capable of administering the state along rational and scientific lines.<sup>5</sup> Where the pedagogical notions of these literary critics differed from the former view was the social origin and size of the trained elite and its replacement of an education in Classics or Philosophy with English Literature. Whilst they agreed with the views of socially minded technocrats such as P.M.S. Blackett or C.P. Snow that the pool of talent must be broadened, they rejected wholesale the notion that scientific rationalism rather than literary humanism was the basis of training an elite. Knights, Dobrée, Bateson, and Daiches sought to educate an elite based on intellectual ability rather than wealth or class privilege, and in which education and culture was not restricted by the ability of the individual to pay for it. Precisely because a degree in English Literature allowed its possessor to enter a range of vocations, rather than being confined to a particular, English had the potential to transform the way people thought and felt about and governed one another. There were, of course, many other academics and critics interested in the social function of literature at the time. These included many so-called 'left-Leavisites' such as R.C. Churchill, David Holbrook, and Boris Ford; Marxists such as Arnold Kettle and Edgell Rickword; literary historians such as Humphry House, V. de S. Pinto at Nottingham, A.R. Humphreys, and P.A.W. Collins at Leicester, and the countless teachers of both school children and adult education students.<sup>6</sup> Knights, Dobrée, Bateson, and Daiches have not attained, in posterity's view, the mantle of first-rank critics in their own right, in the manner of say Leavis, Eliot, or Empson or American critics such as Lionel Trilling and Edmund Wilson, themselves deeply aware of the social and political importance of literature, but they nonetheless played an important, and hitherto neglected, part in the development of English literature in British universities. The importance of these social democratic critics was two-fold: in their influence on a number of critics and writers of the postwar generation (many of whom drew even more explicitly political conclusions about the relationship between literature and society) and in their intellectual and administrative influence on the composition and role of university English faculties.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State Since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). In terms of the mid-twentieth-century context see Matthew Thomson, *Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. Chapters 3 and 4; Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. Chapters 1 and 7; Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Doyle, *English and Englishness*, pp. 95–100.

It was through the work of these figures that many of Leavis' own ideas about English within the university were put into practice, albeit in a modified form. Leavis was himself a significant and influential proponent of the wider social and cultural role of the English School, though his scepticism towards political commitment distinguishes him from the theme of this article.<sup>7</sup> His 'Sketch for an "English School"' (1940), subsequently published as *Education and the University* (1943) and his long introduction to John Stuart Mill's *Essays on Bentham and Coleridge* (1950) were important interventions in debates about the place of the university and English Literature within society.<sup>8</sup> Here Leavis was uncharacteristically optimistic, maintaining that the effort to 'restore in relation to the modern world the idea of liberal education – is worth making because, in spite of all our talk about disintegration and decay, and in spite of what we feel with so much excuse in our many despondent moments, we still have a positive cultural tradition'.<sup>9</sup> In this belief, Leavis was far from alone. Recent work on Leavis such as Guy Ortolano's *The Two Cultures Controversy* (2009), Chris Hilliard's *English as A Vocation* (2012), and David Ellis' *Memoirs of a Leavisite* (2013) has rightly put Leavis and *Scrutiny* into wider intellectual context, which this article seeks to continue. Though Leavis' position within the Cambridge English Faculty meant that his own sketch could only be implemented in piecemeal fashion at Downing College, his ideas resonated with and influenced academics at other universities. By moving beyond tired, unhelpful definitions of 'Leavisite' and 'non-Leavisite', I suggest a greater affinity between academic literary critics concerned with the social function of pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> These critics, working at provincial universities, possessed a broadly social democratic outlook, and a firm belief that the study of literature served a particular need within society and was vital for the survival of a robust democracy.

<sup>7</sup> F. R. Leavis, 'Under Which King Bezonian?', *Scrutiny*, 1 (1932), 205–14; 'Critic and Leviathan', *Politics and Letters* 1 (1947) 58–61.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Storer, 'Educations and the University: Structure and Sources' in F. R. Leavis: *Essays and Documents*, ed. by Ian Mackillop and Richard Storer (Sheffield: Imprint Academic, 1995), pp. 129–46, esp. pp. 135–7. Storer suggests the inspiration came both from Leavis' lectures to the student English Club in 1938–9 and Leavis' need to renew his lectureship in 1940. D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of the English Language and Literature from its Origins to the Making of the Oxford English School* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963 [for the University of Hull]), pp. 158–64; MacKillop, *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism* (London: Allen Lane, 1995), pp. 232–40.

<sup>9</sup> F. R. Leavis, *Education and the University: A Sketch for an "English School"* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943) p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Sn., 'The Hidden network of Leavisites', *Observer*, 11 March 1962, p. 12; Stefan Collini, 'As a Vocation', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 November 2012, p. 3, who criticizes the epithet 'Leavisites'.

### Anti-Franco Jam: L.C. Knights and the Varieties of English Teaching

Lionel Charles Knights (1906–1997) was one of the first editors of *Scrutiny*, who ultimately drifted away from Leavis and the journal: ‘There was no spectacular quarrel. . . It was simply that my “loyalty” was more and more in question’.<sup>11</sup> Like Leavis, Knights developed particular ideas about English teaching rooted in the social function of literature though, unlike his former teacher, Knights’ engagement with left-wing politics led him to see students of English contributing to the values that sustained a social democratic society. His attitude towards politics, education, and the wider social role of English Literature, which underpinned his output from the late 1930s, provides a key example of where Leavisite ideas about literature and culture merged with those of social democratic politics to present a reconsideration of the place of the English department within the university, in particular its relation to other subjects.

Knights’ first major publication, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1937) was a literary historical examination of T.S. Eliot’s ‘dissociation of sensibility thesis’, about the rupture between poetry and civilization in seventeenth-century England, against a background of economic history. Knights devoted half of the book – as some critics suggested, the better half – to a detailed economic and social history of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and suggested how the rise of various forms of capitalism, and new attitudes towards wealth and usury, had come to infect the language and poetic sensibility of Elizabethan and early Jacobean playwrights.<sup>12</sup> Knights’ work owed a conscious debt to the work of the socialist historian R.H. Tawney (particularly his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926)), with whom Knights had discussed the historical parts of *Drama and Society*.<sup>13</sup> Like Tawney, Knights’ historical account suggested a potential solution to contemporary problems, which stressed the affinity of socialism and community. Responding to a critical review by the Marxist literary critic, Alick West, in

<sup>11</sup> L. C. Knights, ‘Remembering *Scrutiny*’, *Sewanee Review*, 89 (1981), 583–5. Knights had offered his resignation from the editorial board in 1947 as he no longer played any active part in the journal, pp. 566–7. Knights quotes Leavis, p. 584. ‘I have never questioned your right to emancipate yourself. But to ask me to connive at the suggestion that you’ve done anything but go over to the Enemy is to ask me to abet the stultification of my life’s work.’

<sup>12</sup> F. W. Bateson, ‘Second Thoughts II: L.C. Knights and Restoration Comedy’ *Essays in Criticism*, vii (1957), 56–67.

<sup>13</sup> L. C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* [1937] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), pp. 10, 135–7; Stefan Collini, ‘Where did it all go wrong? Cultural Critics and “Modernity” in inter-war Britain’, in *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate*, ed. by E. H. H. Green and Duncan Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 247–74; Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The Scrutiny Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 46–71.

the *Left Review*, Knights wrote that 'Socialism offers the only rational alternative to the present economic impasses', whilst Marxist attempts to reduce cultural and moral problems to a purely economic level were patently absurd.<sup>14</sup>

For Raymond Williams, who attended seminars given by Knights in Cambridge before the war, *Drama and Society* was a deeply influential book, especially in the way it presented the idea of culture in its historical context:<sup>15</sup> 'I read and reread it throughout that period. I was dissatisfied with it, but it seemed much nearer to my focus of interest than what Leavis himself was writing'.<sup>16</sup> *Drama and Society*, and the essays collected in the volume *Explorations* (1946), became staple texts for postwar adult education tutors who naturally taught literature in its wider historical and social context.<sup>17</sup> Knights' essay in the latter volume, 'The University Teaching of English and History: A Plea for Correlation', was particularly pertinent to adult education tutors, arguing that the contemporary world required that students study the wholeness of former societies. What Knights termed 'cultural history' gave the student the necessary tools which could, and must, be applied to the problems of the present and by those 'involved in any long-range programme for human betterment'.<sup>18</sup> For many such as Williams, Knights' work offered a means of reconciling Marxist and Leavisite notions of culture. Knights was an important advocate for the study of literature in a social context; a notion which Leavis himself would later propound in his own 'Sketch for an "English School"'.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the 1930s, Knights had taught adult education classes in literature at Cambridge, Manchester, and Sheffield.<sup>19</sup> His 1937 report for a class in

<sup>14</sup> L. C. Knights, 'Mr. Knights replies to Alick West', *Left Review*, 3 (1937), 566; Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (London: Verso, 1981), pp. 72, 90–1, 106–7, 112–3; Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies: A Discipline in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 116–8.

<sup>15</sup> Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2008), p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 92; Raymond Williams, *Reading and Criticism* (London: Muller, 1950) pp. ix–x; Smith, *Williams*, p. 257. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1964) was also influenced by the book, Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 184, 229.

<sup>17</sup> Williams' tutorial class on 'Culture and Environment', taught yearly from 1946 to the mid-1950s in East Sussex and Kent, featured these as key texts on his reading list: Archives of the Oxford Department of Continuing Education DCE/3/60/35. See also DCE/3/60/34, G. Taylor, terminal course on Elizabethan Life and Literature, Lincoln, 1951–2; Guy Chapman, 'Literature and the W.E.A.', *Highway*, (1937), 53–4.

<sup>18</sup> L. C. Knights, 'The University Teaching of English and History?: A Plea for Correlation', in *Explorations: Essays in Criticism: Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946), p. 191. This was his 1939 inaugural lecture at Sheffield University.

<sup>19</sup> University of Sheffield Library, Archives of University Board of Extramural Studies annual for 17 March 1948 and [March] 1950; R. D. Waller, *Residential College: Origins of the Lamb Guildhouse and Holly Royde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), p. 11.



Burnley in Lancashire encapsulated his conception of the wider social role of literature:

The purpose of the course was both to improve the student's equipment for dealing with the literature of his own country, and to show the significance of literary studies in relation to everyday interests and activities. . . Significant aspects of the modern environment were then considered in this perspective, and an attempt was made to come to grips with the problems of mental standardisation and the 'levelling down' of emotional life; advertisements, war poems, examples of propaganda, etc., were analysed in order to find out how words were used to affect our lives at present.<sup>20</sup>

Knights' choice of writers and poets for his courses were representative – even derivative – of early *Scrutiny*, asking one class: 'Would you like to work in the Wheelright's Shop?', a reference to the work of George Sturt.<sup>21</sup> Like other 'left-Leavisites', Knights believed that the teaching of literature should not merely be confined to a critical elite. This wider audience, based in provincial cities, included adult education students, English undergraduates, and trainee teachers. It was through reaching this wider (though not mass) audience that Knights hoped to instil the values capable of reforming society along social democratic lines.

In a number of articles for *Scrutiny*, Knights highlighted the failure of hard-pressed departments to force undergraduates to think for themselves rather than merely to imbibe information passively from lectures.<sup>22</sup> The undergraduate at a redbrick university – often travelling several hours a day and living in conditions hardly conducive to critical reflection – was overly reliant on excessive numbers of basic lectures which taught few skills beyond note taking and committing to memory facts about literature, rather than critical appreciation.<sup>23</sup> Despite adherence to the 'dogma' of rote-learning, universities were not (as many Marxist

<sup>20</sup> Kew Public Records Office, Ed/73/67, Report on the twenty-seventh year's working session, 1935–6 Manchester University Department of Extra Mural Studies, p. 8, L.C. Knights, Terminal Course, Literature and the Modern World, Burnley. See also Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> Cambridge University Library Archives, Cambridge University Board of Extramural Studies, BEMS/17/3, L. C. Knights, 1st year tutorial, Literature and the Modern World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).

<sup>22</sup> Knights, 'Will the Training Colleges Bear Scrutiny', *Scrutiny*, 1 (1932), 247–62; 'Training Colleges: Repercussions', 1 (1933), 388–9; 'Scrutiny of Examinations', 2 (1933), 137–62; 'The Modern Universities', 6 (1938), 360–75. Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 112–3; Mulhern, *Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Knights, 'Modern Universities', p. 368. Knights also made a similar point in 'Problems of the Modern Universities', *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 February 1941, p. 71. William Whyte, *Redbrick: A Social and Architectural History of Britain's Civic Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 184.



critics suggested) stooges of '[Henry] Ford, Beaverbrook or the Nationalist Government' intent on creating a passive society of consumers. Rather, they served 'the modern world not by toadying to this or that "interest" but simply by *not* producing a sufficient number of men who are educated enough to make fundamental criticism of society as they find it'.<sup>24</sup>

For Knights, educational reform was itself a form of 'practical politics'.<sup>25</sup> The ideal English School, as Knights conceived it, produced students 'equipped to be intelligent and responsible about the problems of contemporary civilization', who possessed 'sensitive and flexible intelligence that can be brought to bear effectively upon the problems which concern the individual', as well as 'an ability to respond to what the past has to offer . . . that may be of value to the present'.<sup>26</sup> Rather than churning out advertising men or the educators of tomorrow's capitalists, the purpose of an English School was to produce 'misfits' rather than 'spare parts' to the capitalist system.<sup>27</sup> In a review of Bruce Truscott's *Redbrick* (1943), Knights criticized the distinction that existed 'between "disinterested scholarship" on the one hand and technical instruction on the other, with the balance tilted more and more decidedly in favour of "the needs of industry"', arguing that it was up to individuals working 'as best they can' to articulate a vision for the social relevance of the university.<sup>28</sup> The English School, as Knights conceived it, was not a recreation of the Downing system in northern redbrick universities – *Scrutiny* with smokestacks – but something closer to the growing call of left-wing advocates, such as Tawney, A.D. Lindsay, and John Macmurray, that universities produce a better class of men and women from a broader social class, capable of enacting meaningful social change.<sup>29</sup>

Knights' 'misfits' at Manchester University included the literary critic, and anti-nuclear weapons campaigner Walter Stein, Roy Shaw (who became director of the Arts Council), and the novelist Anthony Burgess.<sup>30</sup> Following Knights' own example, all three taught English to adult education classes.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Knights, 'Modern Universities', p. 362, pp. 372–3.

<sup>25</sup> Knights, 'Scrutiny of Examinations', p. 162; Mulhern, *Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, p. 80.

<sup>26</sup> Knights, 'Modern Universities', p. 363.

<sup>27</sup> Knights, 'The Modern Universities: A Postscript', *Scrutiny*, 7 (1938), pp. 1–2.

<sup>28</sup> L. C. Knights, 'The Modern Universities, Redbrick University', *Scrutiny*, 12 (1943), p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Taylor and Tom Steele, *British Labour and Higher Education, 1945 to 2000* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 23–62.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Randall, 'Moral Strategist: Walter Stein', *Guardian*, 26 August 1996, p. 10; Roy Shaw, 'How Many Children Had Macbeth?: Obituary of L. C. Knights', *Guardian*, 11 March 1997, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Burgess taught for the Birmingham Department of Extramural Studies from 1946–50, Stein and Shaw taught primarily English for Leeds University Extramural Department after 1945. Luke Spencer, 'From Appreciation to Engagement: 50 Years of Literature Teaching', *Beyond the Walls: 50 Years of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Leeds, 1946–1996*, ed. by Richard Taylor (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1996), pp. 214–8.

Burgess' autobiography recalls Knights teaching the first practical criticism classes at Manchester.<sup>32</sup> Knights sold homemade jam to raise money for Republican Spain and was often seen reading the *Daily Worker*: primarily, he claimed, for its betting tips. Initially sceptical, Burgess warmed to Knights' blend of critical rigour and left-wing politics.<sup>33</sup>

Knights' tenure as Winterstoke Professor of English Literature at Bristol from 1953 to 1965 saw a significant expansion of the department. Whilst maintaining the primacy of seminars and tutorials (despite a significant rise in student numbers), the department was catholic in the range of options available. Students in their final two years sat ten papers, with only Practical Criticism as mandatory. Bristol was one of the first to offer Joint Honours Degrees in Special Schools such as Medieval and Modern English, Modern English and Philosophy, or Modern English and History. Knights was also instrumental in setting up the first drama department in the country.<sup>34</sup> Knights believed that this approach allowed 'for differences of emphasis within the bounds of a common purpose' and provided a 'genuinely humane education in English Studies'.<sup>35</sup> In his work as an adult education tutor and English academic, Knights sought to combine many ideas from Leavis and *Scrutiny* with a wider awareness of the positive role which the study of language and literature played within society. He hoped that his 'misfit' students would, in their subsequent careers, be able to apply this new insight to the problems confronting modern society, whose solution, Knights believed, lay in working together towards the realization of a common humanity.

### Bonamy Dobrée: A 'debonair dilettante' at Redbrick University

In 1944, Leavis wrote to Bonamy Dobrée (1891–1974), Professor of English Literature at Leeds, attempting to enlist the latter's support in a scheme to implement the ideas set out in his *Education and the University*. He wrote that 'One of my dreams is the capture of a Redbrick *by an ally*, so that I should feel less isolated here ... I want now to do something towards promoting relations between

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God: Being the First Part of the Confessions of Anthony Burgess* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 173. Andrew Biswell, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* (London: Picador, 2005), pp. 46–8.

<sup>33</sup> Burgess, *Little Wilson*, pp. 174–6. Knights appears, in passing, in Burgess' novel *Earthly Powers* (London: Vintage, 2004 [1980]), p. 245.

<sup>34</sup> Basil Cottle and J. W. Sherborne, *The Life of a University* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1951), pp. 49–50; G. W. Brandt, 'Drama: Beginners Please', in *University and Community: Essays to Mark the Centenary of the Founding of University College, Bristol*, ed. by J. Macqueen and S. W. Taylor (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1976), pp. 94–5; Don Carleton, *A University for Bristol: A History in Texts and Pictures* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1984), pp. 64–5; Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> L. C. Knights, 'English at Bristol', *Critical Survey*, 1 (1963), 180–2.

English and History . . . as a School'. Leavis stressed that 'with collaborators from one or two places outside [Downing College] the improvement in the situation would be disproportionate'.<sup>36</sup> Dobrée could not, by any stretch, be said to be a Leavisite: he had written a scathing review of Leavis' *Revaluation* for the *Spectator*, to be followed by an equally dismissive assessment of *The Great Tradition*.<sup>37</sup> Leavis' overture was motivated by the claims which Dobrée had recently put forwards for the place of the English School within the postwar university and by extension postwar society, with which Leavis was broadly in agreement.

Dobrée has hitherto been linked to the names of either his friend T.S. Eliot, for whose journal, *The Criterion* Dobrée was a lead contributor, or as the mentor of Richard Hoggart, such that his own work has often been neglected.<sup>38</sup> Hoggart's memoirs are warmly appreciative of his tutor's seminal influence and their long correspondence affirms this.<sup>39</sup> Yet Hoggart's presentation of Dobrée in his memoirs as a cosmopolitan somewhat out of place at Leeds is something of a misrepresentation, which has been echoed by subsequent writers. Dobrée has been described as alternately 'metropolitan' or 'cosmopolitan', an 'upper class flâneur', a 'debonair dilettante . . . an odd compound of [Lytton] Strachey and Kipling, belletrist frivolity and public school backbone', a man of 'urbanity, wit, connections and ultimately "style"' decidedly out of place in the drab world of Leeds.<sup>40</sup> Tom Steele has asked 'How different could Hoggart and Dobrée have been?'<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Papers of Bonamy Dobrée, 20c/Dobree/box 7, Brotherton Collection, Leeds University Library, letter from F. R. Leavis to Bonamy Dobrée, 10 January 1944. Leavis also believed (wrongly) that Dobrée had some influence over the appointment of the new King Edward VII Professor of English Literature.

<sup>37</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'The Aeolian Harp,' *Spectator*, 23 October 1936, p. 694; 'The Importance of Fiction', 3 December 1948, pp. 736–7. Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 202–3; Mulhern, *Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, p. 315. Leavis had also attacked Dobrée: 'What's Wrong With Criticism', *Scrutiny* (1932), pp. 132–46.

<sup>38</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'T. S. Eliot: A Personal Reminiscence', *Sewanee Review*, 74 (1966), 85–108.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Hoggart, *A Sort of Clowning: Life and Times, 1940–1959* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990), p. 215; Richard Hoggart, 'Bonamy Dobrée: Teacher and Patron of Young Men', in *Of Books and Humankind: Essays and Poems Presented to Bonamy Dobrée*, ed. by John Butt. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 195–208; Richard Hoggart, *A Local Habitation, 1918–40* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), pp. 209–18.

<sup>40</sup> M. Rosenfield, 'Local Habitations: Working-class childhood and its uses in the memoirs of Richard Hoggart and others', in *Re-Reading Richard Hoggart: Life, Literature, Language, Education*, ed. by Sue Owen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), p. 135; Fred Inglis, *Richard Hoggart: Virtue and Reward* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), pp. 58–64. Terry Eagleton, 'Nudge-winking', *London Review of Books*, 19 September 2002, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Tom Steele, 'Questions of Taste and Class: Richard Hoggart and Bonamy Dobrée', in *Re-Reading Richard Hoggart: Life, Literature, Language, Education*, ed. by Sue Owen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), p. 142. See also Arthur Sherbo, 'Restoring Bonamy Dobrée: Additions to the Canon of his Writings', *Notes and Queries*, 49 (2002), 96–7.

The answer is not so different after all, given the immense social value both attached to the study of literature. Beneath Dobrée's patrician veneer lay a keen interest in the ways in which literature and the provincial university could enact social reconstruction. Dobrée was a lifelong socialist and a prominent member of the British Popular Front during the 1930s. He was a founding member of the British section of Writers' International, in 1934, attending the International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in 1935.<sup>42</sup> Though partly cosmopolitan and liberal, these organizations also brought him into close intellectual proximity with a number of Communists.<sup>43</sup> Dobrée was also involved in the Social Credit Movement, alongside writers such as T.S. Eliot, Storm Jameson, Ezra Pound, and Herbert Read (all connected to Eliot's *Criterion*), which sought anti-capitalist solutions to the contemporary economic system based on radical forms of redistribution of purchasing power.<sup>44</sup>

Dobrée also wrote a number of popular history books from a leftist perspective, including *The Floating Republic* (1935), an influential account of the Napoleonic-era naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, which a young Roy Fuller saw as 'an inkling of how [revolution in Britain] might come about . . . and gave hope to the left in the grim days of the Thirties' economic crisis'.<sup>45</sup> His *English Revolts* (1937) was a history from the Peasants' Revolt to the General Strike which argued for a radical revolutionary change in the nature of British society.<sup>46</sup> Dobrée was also editor of the frequently reprinted

<sup>42</sup> See Bonamy Dobrée, 'Toeing the Party Line: Response to Philip Henderson', *Spectator*, 15 August 1935, p. 18. Writers' International (also known as the International Union of Revolutionary Writers) included Louis Aragon, Theodore Dreiser, and Bertolt Brecht and was nominally run from Moscow under close direction of Comintern. See Janet Batsleer, Rony Davies, Rebecca O'Rourke and Chris Weedon, *Rewriting English: Cultural Politics of Gender of Class* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 60–2. The International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture had fewer links to international Communism and included Andrés Malraux, André Breton, Aldous Huxley, E. M. Forster, Boris Pasternak, Isaac Babel, Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich Mann.

<sup>43</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'English Revolts', *Left Review*, 3 (1937).

<sup>44</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, *An Open Letter to a Professional Man* (London: S. Nott, 1935); Bonamy Dobrée, 'National Credit and Distribution', *Spectator*, 13 April 1934, p. 17; Alec Brown, 'Credit and Distribution', 20 April 1934, p. 17; Dobrée, 'Credit and Distribution', 26 April 1934, p. 18. See Brian Burkitt and Frances Hutchinson, *Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 131–71; Roger Kojecky, *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. 83–4; Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 127–42; Richard Aldington to T. S. Eliot in 'The Letters of T. S. Eliot: Volume 3, 1926–7,' ed. by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 519.

<sup>45</sup> Roy Fuller, *Spanner and Pen: Post-War Memoirs* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), p. 16. *The Floating Republic* was reissued as one of the first Pelican books in 1938.

<sup>46</sup> See Bonamy Dobrée, *English Revolts* (London: H. Joseph, 1937), pp. 13–4.

and highly accessible *Introductions to English Literature* (1938), in which his own volume, *The Victorians and After* (co-written with Edith Batho), was overtly hostile to modern society, presenting the literature of the age as a concerted and inspired attack on industrial capitalism from Robert Browning to Oscar Wilde.<sup>47</sup>

For a writer with so many metropolitan and cosmopolitan interests and friends, Dobrée found provincial Leeds surprisingly conducive to his conception of culture and society. His thoughts and activities were galvanized during the Second World War and the opportunities it provided for wider social and educational change. As well as wartime work for PEN, and acting as a member of the Central Advisory Council for Education (which oversaw the implementation of the 1944 Butler Act), he was a co-founder of *Universities Quarterly* in 1946.<sup>48</sup> Dobrée ran the Leeds Officer Training Corps and was a Lieutenant-Colonel to the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA), which sought to bring political and social education to the rank and file of the armed forces.<sup>49</sup> As well as being blamed by Churchill for the 1945 Labour victory, and acting as a major vehicle for social reconstruction and postwar education, the Bureau attracted a number of young graduates including Boris Ford, David Holbrook, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, as well as Dobrée's former student Richard Hoggart, who taught English Literature classes in adult education after 1945.<sup>50</sup>

Speaking in Newcastle in 1943, Dobrée predicted that postwar reconstruction would lead to a surge in demand for education and would herald the rise of provincial universities as beacons of national life. Like Knights, who also saw provincial redbrick universities as key to social reconstruction, he criticized the universities' present function as mere training colleges for teachers, accountants, and technicians rather than cultural bastions creating the citizens required to administer a welfare state. In a striking anticipation of C.P. Snow's 'Two Cultures' thesis Dobrée outlined the risk of 'two nations'

<sup>47</sup> Bonamy Dobrée and Edith C. Batho, *The Victorians and After 1830-1914* (London: Cressett Press, 1938). Batho was reader in English Literature at UCL and later Principal of Royal Holloway College.

<sup>48</sup> *The Clarke Report: Schools and Life* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/clarke1947/clarke1947.html>>, [accessed 18 October 2015].

<sup>49</sup> Dobrée ran the ABCA Officer Training Courses held at Wakefield as well as being the Colonel of the Leeds Officer Training Corps, T. H. Hawkins and L. J. F. Brimble, *Adult Education: The Record of the British Army* (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 162. Dobrée had been a professional soldier before and during the First World War.

<sup>50</sup> Steele, 'Questions of Taste', p. 149. Papers of Bonamy Dobrée, Box 20c/Dobrée/Box 3, Richard Hoggart to Dobrée 4 and 9 [August 1942], in which Hoggart writes to Dobrée on ABCA matters, asking if he might come to lecture to Hoggart's unit; and Tuesday 26 October 1944.

of students, with those in the humanities ‘dedicated to one aspect of a “culture”, which they acquire simply for the purposes of teaching it’, compared to those ‘altering the social structure by scientific discovery and technical innovation . . . usually innocent of reflective thought’.<sup>51</sup> Dobrée envisaged the postwar provincial university as an essential tool for democracy, acting as a bastion of cultural value in places often lacking cultural and intellectual life. Universities had to become leading ‘propagandists’ for social change and ‘the good life . . . so they [could] help to mould the new industrial civilization in which the century of the common man [would] find its being’.<sup>52</sup>

Dobrée expanded these views, in his 1944 article in *Political Quarterly* on ‘Arts’ Faculties in Modern Universities’:

The average Arts’ student knows little or nothing of the political ideas affecting the shape of things . . . If the Arts’ Faculties are to breed men and women who feel themselves to be the guardians and creators of civilized values, these things must be given more than a passing glance. Arts’ Faculties, in short, must somehow make their studies . . . relevant to the society of the present times, so that they can perpetuate what is valuable in tradition, not so much to preserve it against attack as to re-create it in the context of to-day.<sup>53</sup>

The Arts Faculty, of which the English School was its most vital constituent, was to provide a map for unifying all other disciplines within a humane framework of understanding.<sup>54</sup> It was shortly after the publication of this that Leavis approached Dobrée to help implement his ‘Sketch for an English School’, agreeing with Dobrée’s ‘statements of protest’ against the contemporary climate, as well as with many of the ‘educational opportunities’ put forward, although he questioned precisely how ‘the translation into actualities’ might be achieved in a ‘working scheme’.<sup>55</sup> Where the more pessimistic Leavis differed from Dobrée (and, for that matter, Knights, whom he believed to have become isolated and despondent at Manchester) was the

<sup>51</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, *The Universities and Regional Life: The Twenty-fifth Early Grey Memorial Lecture* (Newcastle: University of Newcastle, 1943), p. 10. See also Dobrée, ‘Reviews [Bruce Truscott’s *Redbrick* and Brian Simon’s *A Student’s View of Universities*],’ *Highway*, xvi (1943) and ‘Mission of the University [Review of *The University Idea* by Ortega y Gasset],’ *Spectator*, 8 June 1945, p. 528.

<sup>52</sup> Dobrée, *Universities*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, ‘Arts’ Faculties in Modern Universities, *Political Quarterly*, 15 (1944), p. 246.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 249–50, 252, 244. See also Dobrée, ‘IV: Citizenship in the Universities’, *Universities Quarterly* (1947–1948), pp. 283–94.

<sup>55</sup> Dobrée/Box 7, Leavis to Dobrée, 13 February 1944.



extent to which literature could really be used as a tool to create and to run a better, more just society.<sup>56</sup>

At Leeds, Dobrée put into action his belief that the provincial university should act as a 'propagandist for the good life', breaking down the divide between academia and civic life. Dobrée became a major cultural spokesman and patron of the arts in West Yorkshire during and after the Second World War, writing a number of articles for the *Yorkshire Post* advocating reforms of schools, art galleries, and museums. This opening up of facilities that were previously the property of the local elite, Dobrée hoped, would have the effect of democratizing education and culture in much the same way that ABCA had sought to do.<sup>57</sup> With funds from a wealthy Leeds businessman, Dobrée established the Gregory Fellowships in Poetry, Painting, and Sculpture at the university in 1950, which sought to create a link between the creative world, the university, and the local community.<sup>58</sup> During the 1950s, the English faculty was home to a number of people who went on to be significant writers and poets including Tony Harrison, Geoffrey Hill, Robin Skelton, Vernon Scannell, Jon Silkin, James Simmons, and Wole Soyinka (a later Nobel laureate), as teachers, students, or writers in residence, all of whom acknowledged a debt to Dobrée.<sup>59</sup> His academic appointments

<sup>56</sup> Leavis to Dobrée, 10 January and 21 October 1944.

<sup>57</sup> Sn., 'Cafés in Art Galleries: Col. B. Dobrée's Suggestions', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 1 February 1943, p. 5; 'Ideal University', 8 February 1943, p. 5; 'Leeds University as it Might Be', 9 February 1943, p. 6; 'Where Education Falls Short: Professor Dobrée at Bradford Speech Day', 24 May 1944, p. 6; 'Creating an Elite', 24 May 1944, p. 5; 'University's Part in City Life', 22 September 1945, p. 4; Kenneth Young, 'Personal Studies: Professor Bonamy Dobrée', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 20 December 1954, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'Notes on the Gregory Fellowships', 28 February 1956, Brotherton Collection, Leeds University Library, University Scholarships and Awards, Box 5; Jon Glover, 'Creative Writing as Curriculum or Subversion: T. S. Eliot, Bonamy Dobrée and the Gregory Fellows in Leeds', *PN Review*, 40 (2014), 44–7; <[http://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/33/the\\_gregory\\_fellowships](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/33/the_gregory_fellowships)>, [accessed 18 October 2015]. The appointment committee consisted of T. S. Eliot, Henry Moore, Herbert Read and Dobrée, all of whom had a strong connection to Leeds.

<sup>59</sup> Sn., 'Bonamy Dobrée' at <[https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/369/leeds\\_lives/79/leeds\\_lives/3](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/369/leeds_lives/79/leeds_lives/3)>, [accessed 18 October 2015]; <[http://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/13/poets\\_at\\_the\\_university\\_of\\_leeds/23/geoffrey\\_hill](http://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/13/poets_at_the_university_of_leeds/23/geoffrey_hill)>, [accessed 18 October 2015]. Hill was the Gregory Fellow in 1961; Brian Cox, 'Robin Skelton', *Guardian*, 29 August 1997; James Andrew Taylor, *Walking Wounded: The Life and Poetry of Vernon Scannell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 141–3; Alan Brownjohn, 'Vernon Scannell', *Guardian*, 19 November 2007; James Simmons, 'James Simmons', in *In the Chair: Interviews with Poets from the North of Ireland*, ed. by John Brown (Moher, Co. Clare: Salmon Publishing, 2002), p. 62; Wole Soyinka with Mary David, in *Writing Across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*, ed. by Susheila Nasta (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 22–3. See Bonamy Dobrée, 'English Poets Today: The Younger Generation,' *Sewanee Review*, LXII (1954), 598–620.



in the department included G. Wilson Knight, Geoffrey Hill, and the Communist Arnold Kettle as a lecturer in 1947, at a time when Communists were largely excluded from academic posts.<sup>60</sup>

Dobrée's tenure at Leeds brought in a far more eclectic and humane approach to literature than the department, which had previously specialized in the philology of Anglo-Saxon and Old English, previously taught. In the early 1950s, Dobrée instituted various syllabus reforms such as a first year requirement to study Greek, Latin, or a modern language plus an external subject in the Arts, Economics, or Commerce Faculties. The third year student was expected to attend weekly seminars and tutorials, and had the option of writing a thesis.<sup>61</sup> His colleague G. Wilson Knight remarked that Dobrée's conception of teaching literature reflected the openness and vitality of the Augustan tradition of learning, rather than dry literary scholarship.<sup>62</sup> Dobrée's syllabus reforms maintained that English was best suited 'to carry out that distortion of the mind which is called education with the purpose to creating "civilization"'.<sup>63</sup> He stressed that the greater purpose of English was the 'fusion of imaginative warmth with imaginative understanding', and 'to enable our students to understand the reality of being', which the previous hundred and fifty years of social and economic change had fundamentally disrupted.<sup>64</sup> Dobrée's claims for university English, both as a beacon of local life and as a means of disciplining the individual, stemmed from his preference for a pre-industrial Augustan culture and a belief that firm social change was necessary for modern society: a point he returned to in his 1953 Clark Lectures, *The Broken Cistern*.<sup>65</sup> Like Knights, whose own literary utopia lay in a pre-capitalist Elizabethan society, this nostalgia was combined with a decidedly modern preference for democratic socialism and state funding for education and the arts. Crucially, Dobrée saw no reason why this formerly elitist and aristocratic culture should not be available to undergraduates from a variety of backgrounds at a provincial university such as Leeds, or why these

<sup>60</sup> Dipek Nandy, 'Arnold Kettle and English Marxist Literary Criticism', in Arnold Kettle, *Literature and Liberation: Selected Essays*, ed. by Graham Martin and W. R. Owens (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 1–20.

<sup>61</sup> *University of Leeds Gazette*, 1 (1953), 7–9; *Calendar of Leeds University, 1953–4* (Leeds: Jowett and Story, 1954), pp. 268–9. In 1953–4 candidates sat papers on either Shakespeare or Milton (alternate years), the novel or drama (that year Ibsen), a seminar on a specified author, prose or poetry, criticism, and an individual tutorial.

<sup>62</sup> G. Wilson Knight, 'Emeritus Professor Bonamy Dobrée O. B. E.', *University of Leeds Reviews*, 4 (1955), 377–8.

<sup>63</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'What is Literature For', in *English Studies Today*, ed. by C. L. Wrenn and G. Bullough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 174–5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 180, 182.

<sup>65</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, *The Broken Cistern: The Clark Lectures 1952–53* (London: Cohen and West, 1954), esp. pp. 1–8, 139–49.

students should not be able to spread that culture through their own teaching and writing.

### **‘The Cobbett of Brill’: F.W. Bateson and Oxford English**

Of the figures discussed here, F.W. Bateson (1901–1978) was the most actively committed to socialism as a political reality. During the 1930s and 1940s, he worked as Chairman, Secretary, and District Organizer for the Buckinghamshire branch of the Labour Party, where he carried out a number of surveys of rural poverty and stood unsuccessfully as a local candidate on several occasions.<sup>66</sup> During the Second World War, he worked as the Chief Statistical Observer for the Buckinghamshire Wartime Agricultural Executive Committee and was the agricultural correspondent for *New Statesman* and the *Observer*, as well as writing pamphlets and books for the Fabian Society advocating a radical programme of nationalizing land ownership.<sup>67</sup> *Towards a Socialist Agriculture* (1946), featured the poem, ‘Lines Written on the Buckinghamshire Machinery Pools’: an epic radical history of the countryside from enclosure onwards, concluding with Bateson’s utopian vision of collective farming.<sup>68</sup> Kingsley Amis, whom Bateson supervised in the late 1940s, remembered him as ‘bucolic and donnish in about equal measure’ and ‘a bit leftie in a sort of Bevanish way’.<sup>69</sup> At first glance, Bateson best fits the group of what Graham Hough condescendingly referred to as ‘literary peasants’, wanting to return to the ‘never-never-land of the organic society’.<sup>70</sup> However, Bateson’s concern with socialism and his work educating a

<sup>66</sup> Sn., ‘Rural District Council Elections’, *Bucks Herald*, 10 April 1936, p. 12; Sn., ‘Labour Party’s Activities’, *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 4 February 1939, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Sn., ‘Obituary: F. W. Bateson’, *Times*, 18 October 1978, p. 19; *Towards a Socialist Agriculture: Studies by a Group of Fabians*, ed. by F. W. Bateson (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946); F. W. Bateson, *Socialism and Farming: Fabian Challenge Pamphlet series 2* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1948); Clare Griffith, ‘Socialism and The Land Question’ in *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. by Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010), p. 248.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Lines on the Buckinghamshire Parish Machinery Pools’, *Towards a Socialist Agriculture: Studies by a Group of Fabians*, ed. by F. W. Bateson (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), pp. xi–xii; first published in *The New Statesman and Nation*, 12th August 1944, p. 104. See Brian Short, *The Battle of The Fields: Rural Community and Authority in Britain During the Second World War* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 121, 133, 355–7, 378–9.

<sup>69</sup> Amis had switched supervisors to Bateson from David Cecil, who later failed his thesis, a fact which Amis ascribed to academic politics directed against Bateson: Kingsley Amis, *Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), p. 103; Zachary Leader, *Kingsley Amis: A Life* (London: Vintage, 2006), pp. 207–10. Kingsley Amis, *Letters of Kingsley Amis*, ed. by Zachary Leader (London: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 188.

<sup>70</sup> Graham Hough, ‘Crisis in Literary Education’, in *Crisis in the Humanities*, ed. by J. H. Plumb (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964) p. 96. The figures Hough referred to were Leavis, David Holbrook, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart.

British cultural elite at Oxford were reconciled through his conception of the English School as the upholder of the English Language on the side of the plain-speaking Englishman against the obfuscation of authority or the snob-bish cant of false-learning: a tradition which ran from Cobbett's *Grammar* to Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language'.<sup>71</sup>

Bateson was a self-titled 'Scholar-Critic', who attempted to bridge the worlds of criticism and scholarship, and who stressed the socially rooted nature of criticism and its importance in democratic society. Bateson attempted singlehandedly to reform the Oxford English Department represented by J.R.R. Tolkien, David Cecil, C.S. Lewis, and Helen Gardner; eminent scholars who were relatively unconcerned with New Critical developments or the place of the university within wider social life.<sup>72</sup> Bateson was, in many ways, Oxford's answer to Leavis – a comparison he welcomed<sup>73</sup> – if only due to the similar hostility and lack of recognition of their respective institutions. Bateson was an influential, mischievous, figure who more than anyone else worked to bring the Oxford English Faculty in line with the wider revolution in English Literature.<sup>74</sup> He was an influential figure among students and younger dons at Oxford including John Carey, Val Cunningham, Roy Fuller, Christopher Ricks, and Stephen Wall.<sup>75</sup>

Bateson's first book, *English Poetry and the English Language: An Experiment in Literary History* (1934), raised the opprobrium of Leavis who denigrated the purpose of literary scholarship: 'A literary history . . . could be successfully attempted only by a critic and would then be essentially literary criticism'.<sup>76</sup> Bateson's response stressed the necessity of understanding the context of a text and its

<sup>71</sup> Valentine Cunningham, 'F. W. Bateson – Scholar, Critic, and Scholar-Critic', *Essays in Criticism*, 29 (1979), 142–8, 150, 152; Donald Davie, 'F. W. Bateson – In Memoriam', *PN Review* (1980); John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1969), p. 289.

<sup>72</sup> D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies: An Account of the Study of the English Language and Literature from Its Origins to the Making of the Oxford English School* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963 [For the University of Hull]), esp. Chapter ix; Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy', pp. 311–2. Gardner was herself a Labour Party activist though made no attempt to connect this to her work.

<sup>73</sup> Marilyn Butler, 'Literature and the Left', *London Review of Books*, 18 August 1983, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Valentine D. Cunningham, 'Bateson's Birthday', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 March 1975, p. 250; Cunningham, 'F. W. Bateson', *Pelican Record of Corpus Christi College*, (1979–80), pp. 84–5; W. W. Robson, 'F. W. Bateson, 1901–78', *Essays in Criticism*, xxix, 1 (1979), 1–2. René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950: English Criticism, 1900–1950* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), pp. 265–74.

<sup>75</sup> Christopher Ricks, 'Interview with Christopher Ricks', *Oxford University English Faculty*, 2 (2009), pp. 5–6; John Carey, *Unexpected Professor* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), p. 203; Christopher Ricks, 'Stephen Wall Obituary', *Guardian*, 31 August 2010.

<sup>76</sup> F. R. Leavis, 'A review of *English Poetry and the English Language*', *Scrutiny*, iv (1935), 96.

readership in its own right, arguing that the language available to the poet inevitably shaped the form of any work: 'The real history of poetry is, I believe, the history of the changes in the kind of language in which successive poems have been written . . . [poets] simply used the language they found in their hands'.<sup>77</sup> Crucially, this provided a firm link between poetry and everyday popular speech, which Bateson believed to be the root of democratic society.

Bateson's article, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in the journal *Essays in Criticism* which he founded in 1951, set out what literary criticism and literary history could achieve together, underpinned by the broader social mission of the English academic: 'The infusion of social issues, in the widest sense of the term, into purely literary criticism is probably the most crying need of all, but a general balance of criticism with scholarship, of technical criticism with literary generalization, or of statistics and stylistics, are other examples of the kind of objective we have set ourselves'.<sup>78</sup> Despite conceiving of *Essays in Criticism* as a sister journal to *Scrutiny*, Leavis again attacked Bateson's claims for scholarship, and subsequently accused him of stealing vital readers and contributors from his own journal, which folded two years later.<sup>79</sup> Bateson's first editorial in *Essays in Criticism* also stressed the place for immediate social relevance in the journal: 'the literary problem must not be divorced from the problems of group-living, in the widest sense, that lie behind it'.<sup>80</sup> Bateson was a teacher, mentor, and friend to several members of the New Left at Oxford, including Graham Martin, Gabriel Pearson, Stuart Hall, Christopher Hill, and Raymond Williams, then a tutor for the Oxford Delegacy for Extramural Studies.<sup>81</sup> It was at one of Bateson's

<sup>77</sup> F. W. Bateson, *English Poetry and the English Language: An experiment in literary history* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1934), p. vi; F. R. Leavis, 'A review of *English Poetry and the English Language*', *Scrutiny*, iv (1935); F. W. Bateson, 'A reply', *Scrutiny*, iv (1935); F. R. Leavis, 'A rejoinder', *ibid.* For a detailed discussion of this debate see Yousef Al Jabani, 'The Leavis-Bateson Debate: a study in condition implication, propensity, and bad-faith', Unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011, <[http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3508/1/Al-Janabi\\_MPhil.pdf](http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3508/1/Al-Janabi_MPhil.pdf)>, [accessed 18 October 2015]; Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 29–30; Small and Guy, *Politics and Value*, pp. 73–6.

<sup>78</sup> F. W. Bateson, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', *Essays in Criticism*, 1, (1953), pp. 26–7.

<sup>79</sup> F. R. Leavis (1953) 'The Responsible Critic: or the Function of Criticism at any time', *Scrutiny*, xix (Spring); Bateson, 'The *Scrutiny* phenomenon', *Sewanee Review*, 85 (Winter 1977), p. 148; Cunningham, 'Scholar, Critic, and Scholar-Critic', esp. pp. 141–3.

<sup>80</sup> Bateson, 'Editorial Note', *Essays in Criticism*, (1951), unpaginated; Elmer Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics* (London: St James Press, 1977), p. 52; Cunningham, 'Critic, Scholar, Scholar-Critic', p. 148.

<sup>81</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The Life and Times of the First New Left', *NLR*, 2nd series, 61 (January–February 2010), p. 182; Stuart Hall, 'Graham Martin', *Guardian*, 12 February 2004; Christopher Hill, 'Radical Prose in 17th Century England: From Marprelate to the Levellers', *Essays in Criticism*, volume xxxii, no. 2 (April 1982), p. 95.

weekly seminars that Williams and Hall first met.<sup>82</sup> Williams, who deeply appreciated the social and political purpose behind Bateson's criticism, became a member of the editorial board of *Essays in Criticism*, publishing many of his early essays in the journal.<sup>83</sup> Bateson's teaching and writing can be said to have had an influence on the literary outlook of *Universities and Left Review* (1957–1959).<sup>84</sup> His early interest in linguistics, social history, and politics appealed to his students as much as his dissidence towards Oxford English and his brilliant and engaging – albeit erratic and gossipy – teaching style.<sup>85</sup>

Despite their heated exchanges, Bateson and Leavis remained on surprisingly good terms.<sup>86</sup> As with Dobrée, Leavis was able to maintain relations with those outside Cambridge who shared a number (if not all) of his attitudes towards the teaching of English. Leavis was one of the early speakers invited to the Oxford Critical Society, speaking approvingly on Yeats' 'Byzantium' poems to an appreciative audience, returning on several subsequent occasions.<sup>87</sup> The society was set up under Bateson's encouragement and sponsorship by his students Al Alvarez and Graham Martin, which acted as something of a 'Trojan horse' for New Criticism at Oxford.<sup>88</sup> Alvarez had not initially taken to his tutor, resisting Bateson's 'rather watered-down, old-time Thirties form of Marxism'. However, their relationship improved markedly when Bateson suggested Alvarez read Richards, Empson, and other

<sup>82</sup> Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 84–6; Smith, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 359–60; Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 144–5, 154; Stuart Hall, 'Interview with Colin McCabe', in *Critical Quarterly*, 50 (Spring/Summer 2008), p. 19. Bateson had been an adult education tutor from 1935–40 and maintained his connection with the Delegacy for Extramural Studies where Williams and later Hall worked.

<sup>83</sup> Butler, 'Literature and the Left', p. 14. Butler was herself taught by Bateson, Sn., 'Marilyn Butler: the Sociable Revolutionary', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 18 September 1995.

<sup>84</sup> See Alexander Hutton, '"Literature, Criticism, and Politics in the New Left, 1956–62", *Twentieth Century British History*, 26 (2016), pp. 51–75.

<sup>85</sup> Cunningham, 'Bateson', p. 86; Donald Davie, 'Bateson's Guide', *The Guardian*, 26 November 1965, p. 15 referred to Bateson as 'perhaps the most influential British critic in the last fifteen years.'

<sup>86</sup> F. W. Bateson, 'F. R. Leavis, *Scrutiny* and *Essays in Criticism*: a retrospect', *Essays in Criticism*, xxviii (1978), p. 361. See also Bateson, 'The *Scrutiny* phenomenon', pp. 144–52 which outlines their friendship and correspondence.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from Martin Dodsworth to James Smith, [November] 1953, Papers of James Smith, Archives of Trinity College, Cambridge, SMIJ 1/1/45: Smith, a former pupil of Leavis had asked his own pupil to report on the state of Oxford English. Al Alvarez, *Where Did It All Go Right?* (London: Richard Cohen, 2000), pp. 127–8.

<sup>88</sup> John Carey Interviewed by Sarah O'Reilly 2012, 'Authors Lives', Sound Recording Accessible at the British Library, Track 10, 1hr 25.

New Critics.<sup>89</sup> The Critical Society's manifesto was blunt in its assessment: 'In Oxford, current literary criticism is both vague and ineffective ... Analytical criticism, which has so far been hindered from developing here, can provide the necessary remedy'. It went on to claim unambiguously that 'The purpose of the Critical Society is to provide an open forum for this "New Criticism"'.<sup>90</sup> Early speakers included D.W. Harding, speaking on Shelley, G. Wilson Knight on Matthew Arnold's 'The Scholar Gypsy', and an inebriated William Empson.<sup>91</sup> The Critical Society and *Essays in Criticism* were platforms for aspiring critics, writers, and poets supported by Bateson including Alvarez, Kingsley Amis, Bernard Bergonzi, Robert Conquest, Donald Davie, John Holloway, Philip Larkin, W.W. Robson, and John Wain.<sup>92</sup> The Critical Society and *Essays in Criticism* were, in effect, an insurgent English School established by Bateson to challenge the Anglo-Saxon attitudes that persisted within Oxford English.

Bateson had first established a bridgehead when coming to Corpus Christi as a lowly college lecturer in 1947. Like Leavis at Downing, Bateson was able to exercise a great influence over his pupils there and at a number of other colleges where he taught. He provided them with copies of a privately printed pamphlet, *The Honour School of English Literature* (1946), in which he provided his esoteric overviews of reading lists and tips on how to research and write essays. Bateson wrote that students should 'read one's author as if one were a member of his original reading public ... quickly and without *arrière pensées*, only stopping to look up unfamiliar words or allusions that the original readers would have taken in their stride'.<sup>93</sup> Only then was the

<sup>89</sup> Al Alvarez, 'Goodbye to All That: Interview with Ian Hamilton,' *The New Review*, 4 (1978), 12–3. Alvarez noted Bateson's classes often had a particular leftist political spin, though Bateson 'was too good a teacher to try to force his opinions or his methods on his students.' Al Alvarez, *Where Did it All Go Right?*, p. 113–5; Wallace Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy' in *CHLC*, vii, 311–3; Jose Harris, 'The Arts and Social Sciences, 1939–1970', in *History of the University of Oxford, volume viii*, ed. by Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 239–41.

<sup>90</sup> Alvarez, 'Goodbye', p. 12. Other founding members included John Miles and David Thompson, later the art critic for the *Times*.

<sup>91</sup> Alvarez, *Where Did it All Go Right?*, chapter 7; Sn., 'Obituary: W. W. Robson', *Times*, 5 August 1993; Haffenden, *Empson, volume ii*, pp. 354–6.

<sup>92</sup> Seamus Perry, 'E in C as a Critical Forum', *Essays in Criticism*, 51 (2001), 161–84, Blake Morrison, *Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) pp. 8, 28, 31, 116, 136–7; Bernard Bergonzi, *Exploding English: Criticism, Theory, Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 5–8; Philip Larkin, *Letters to Monica*, 26 August 1951 (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 25. Larkin's iconoclastic lampoon against the literary critic, 'Fiction and the Reading Public', was published in the journal in 1954.

<sup>93</sup> F. W. Bateson, *The Honour School of English Literature: Notes for My Pupils* (Bletchley: Bletchley Printers, 1946), p. 4. Copy held in Corpus Christi College, Oxford archives belonging to Graham Binns. Binns came to Corpus in 1943 and completed his studies



student to return to the text armed with further contextual information. Primary historical information from authors or critics was to be privileged, followed secondly by judgments of canonical critics (such as Arnold or Bradley). Only at the last instance were works of modern criticism to be consulted.<sup>94</sup> Thus it was only when the student had mastered the language of their subject that they were permitted to compare it to what others had thought, so as to prevent the dogmatic recital of 'stock' judgements. Bateson made clear to the undergraduate precisely *why* English ought to be studied:

I am inclined to believe that it now deserves the highest place of all, because the mental and moral discipline that its study ought to impose is more useful to society, because more fundamental, than that provided by any of the specialized arts or sciences. The English language, after all, is much the most important of the media by which we in England communicate with each other. I am certain that if we are to understand each other better than we have done in the past, we in this generation must take English at least as seriously as our ancestors took Latin and Greek.<sup>95</sup>

Bateson was attempting to foster in his students an appreciation of the English language and its various mutations and permutations and how these were used by particular writers.

In 'The English School in a Democracy', published in *Essays in Criticism* in 1959, Bateson set out both his criticisms of the current state of Oxford English and suggested the wider social function a reformed School might possess.<sup>96</sup> Bateson's practical suggestions included overhauling the intensive examinations at Oxford – which served merely to prove that a student could answer examination questions regardless of whether they actually understood the subject – replacing it with a fairer system based on an equally weighted dissertation which better tested the critical faculties of the student.<sup>97</sup> Characteristically, Bateson advocated a 'closer alliance between literary criticism and the historical study of language' as vital for understanding the developing (and often highly charged) uses of particular words used – or rather

---

in 1947–50. He worked for the Arts Council from 1951–6 and later became an Arts and Broadcasting Manager. See Clive Cowen, 'Graham Binns: Obituary', *Independent* (13 May 2003).

<sup>94</sup> Bateson, *The Honour School of English Literature*, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Doyle, *English*, pp. 108–12. This was, in Brian Doyle's estimation, among the most comprehensive effort at reforming English Studies in Oxford before the 1980s.

<sup>97</sup> F. W. Bateson, 'English in the University: 1. The English School in a Democracy', *Essays in Criticism*, ix (1959), 279–81.



misused – in contemporary politics.<sup>98</sup> Bateson's continued pleas for overhauling the Oxford examination system were comparable to Leavis' own efforts at Cambridge: both criticized the current system of examinations for encouraging meretricious, journalistic writing, with little appreciation for, or commitment to, the real worth of literature: problems which plagued the pages of British newspapers and perpetuated dilettantish belletrism.<sup>99</sup> It was in this spirit that Bateson waged a protracted campaign against the patrician anonymity of the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which a closed elite of reviewers were able cast their approbation on new books with impunity.<sup>100</sup>

For Bateson, a society which privileged equality whilst simultaneously training an educated intelligentsia oblivious of their social function was anathema.<sup>101</sup> Bateson was adamant that 'The privileged position of the universities can only be defended, logically and morally, so long as they continue to fulfil a democratic function'.<sup>102</sup> English taught two vital skills: verification, which was the establishment of facts about the world around oneself through scholarship, and self-identification, which allowed oneself, through a critical process, to empathise and understand the other through 'an educated self-consciousness'.<sup>103</sup> These two processes created the open, empathetic, and yet critical mind – most fully realized in poetic expression – which was the 'model of the process that operates as democracy in the political field and as education in the psychological field'.<sup>104</sup> Without this, British society risked falling prey to the extremist ideological polarities of the Cold War, where both the USSR and USA were 'able to exploit unscrupulously innocent metaphors like capitalism, people, atheism, and freedom'.<sup>105</sup> For Bateson, democracy was a bottom-up process rooted in language, which educated elites had the responsibility of upholding.

Bateson's lifelong opposition to Oxford English meant that he was never asked to examine English candidates. The man who kept the college library 'ideologically free of work by the likes of Helen Gardner', and who puckishly condemned Eliot's *After Strange Gods* to the theology section, tended to

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 281. Bateson recommended the study of linguistics as a way of achieving this, citing Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (1916).

<sup>99</sup> See also Val Cunningham, 'Fact and Tact', *Essays in Criticism*, 51 (2001), 119–38; Cunningham, 'Critic, Scholar, Scholar-Critic', p. 149.

<sup>100</sup> F. W. Bateson, "Organs of Critical Opinion: IV. The *Times Literary Supplement*," *Essays in Criticism*, 7 (1957), 349–62; Jeremy Treglown, 'Bateson and the *TLS*', *Essays in Criticism*, 51 (2001), 148–60. The journal abandoned its anonymous reviewing policy in 1974.

<sup>101</sup> Bateson, 'English School', p. 267.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 268.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pp. 268–9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 285.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 285.

produce pupils unsuited to Oxford examinations, awarded what came to be referred to as 'Bateson Seconds'.<sup>106</sup> Yet even after his death, Bateson continued to cause trouble. The radical collective Oxford English Limited (O.E.L.) of students and academics sought to modernize the teaching of English at Oxford and to introduce 'theory', in the form of Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist analysis, into the syllabus. In the first issue, O.E.L. claimed Bateson was 'stylistically prickly, nonconformist, [and] a hard-hitting controversialist', who would have welcomed the group's efforts.<sup>107</sup> The newly instated F.W. Bateson Memorial Lectures had, like *Essays in Criticism*, become 'a reprocessing of Bateson into a fit totem for the hagiolatry of official Oxford English'.<sup>108</sup> Both the lecture hall and the pages of the journal were filled with precisely the people who had obstructed Bateson in life. O.E.L. claimed Bateson as their predecessor in their struggle against mandatory Anglo-Saxon and against the stifling conservatism of 'the monstrous regiment of examiners', calling for the memorial lecture to be given each year by an embattled junior academic on the subject of syllabus reform.<sup>109</sup>

Bateson's conception of the English School encouraged openness of approach and outlook and a diversity of methods, one which he pursued in his books *The Scholar Critic* and *Essays in Critical Dissent* (both 1972). Bateson's vision was attractive both to left-wing students and academic reformers, as well as those opposed to the conservative complacency of the Faculty. His work as an editor of the *Longmans Annotated Poets* series and his *Longmans Guide to English Literature* (1965) impressed his iconoclastic tone on a further generation of undergraduates and schoolchildren. If, like Leavis, Bateson's outspokenness was met with a lack of academic preferment and his various campaigns met with little success in his lifetime, his influence was, also like Leavis', directly on those students he taught; on the Oxford Critical Society; and on the iconoclastic tone of *Essays in Criticism*.<sup>110</sup> In the words of W. W. Robson, it was to 'F.W.B. more than anyone else that the School owed its introduction to the new currents of thought' suggesting that 'he will be remembered as one of the noteworthy twentieth-century defenders of

<sup>106</sup> Cunningham 'Bateson', p. 85; F. W. Bateson, 'Confessions of an English Literature Teacher', *Pelican*, 3, new series (1975), 20-1.

<sup>107</sup> Sn., 'F. W. Bateson on "The Scandal of the Oxford English School"', *News From Nowhere*, 1986 (Oxford: Oxford English Limited, 1986), pp. 48-9. O. E. L.'s inaugural conference included Daniel Cohen, Terry Eagleton, Thomas Docherty, and Val Cunningham from Oxford as well as Jacqueline Rose, Marilyn Butler, Raymond Williams, Colin McCabe, and Christopher Norris from Cambridge and elsewhere.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 51. For a riposte to these views, see Bernard Richards, 'F. W. Bateson and Oxford English Limited', *Oxford Magazine*, eighth week, Trinity Term 1986, pp. 9-10.

<sup>110</sup> Cunningham, 'Critic, Scholar', pp. 146-7.

education, one who laboured valiantly to reconcile the need for intellectual discipline with the ideals of democracy'.<sup>111</sup> His attempts to force undergraduates to confront the politics of the language they spoke was an attempt to impart to future arts administrators, Fleet Street journalists, and *TLS* reviewers the responsibility and honesty in writing which they owed their publics in a democratic society.

### New Maps of Learning: English at Birmingham and Sussex

The postwar era saw a gradual opening-up of English Faculties to new ideas and new academics more amenable to seeing literature in its social terms. The seven-volume *Pelican Guide to English Literature* (1954–1961), edited by Leavis' pupil Boris Ford (whose work with ABCA led to him being commissioned by his colleague, the Pelican editor W.E. Williams) suggested a new spirit of openness within academic criticism of the 1950s, combining Leavisite approaches to the subject with broader awareness of historical and social contexts, and appealing to a broad, non-specialist reading public as well as becoming a set text for generations of university students.<sup>112</sup> Ford had been involved with a number of other socially minded pupils and colleagues of Leavis, including Denys Thompson and David Holbrook, in editing the journal *Use of English* from 1951, which was published by ABCA's successor the Bureau of Current Affairs.<sup>113</sup> Despite a number of detractors, obsessed with the malign Leavisite presence among contributors,<sup>114</sup> the *Pelican Guide* reflected a new spirit within the expanding profession of English Studies.<sup>115</sup> Though, of the figures discussed, only Knights contributed to the volumes (Dobrée, who knew Williams from his ABCA days, was Allen Lane's first choice but was passed over for overall editor in favour of the younger

<sup>111</sup> Robson, 'Bateson', pp. 1, 4. On 16 February 1980 'The Scholar Critic', an appreciation of Bateson's life was broadcast on Radio 3, presented by Mark Storey and featuring interviews with Al Alvarez, John Carey, Valentine Cunningham, Donald Davie, Christopher Ricks, W. W. Robson, and Ian Small. See <<http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/ab61efdcdce34ec3a2f5a5fae7f4ee17>>, [accessed 18 October 2015].

<sup>112</sup> Boris Ford, 'Round and about the *Pelican Guide to English Literature*', in *The Leavises: recollections and impressions*, ed. by Denys Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 104–10; Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 201–16; Ian MacKillop, *F. R. Leavis: A Life in Criticism* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 169–70.

<sup>113</sup> Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, p. 111.

<sup>114</sup> Hugh Kenner, '...Leaning Together', *Poetry*, 92 (1958); Graham Hough, *The Listener* November 2 1961, p. 738; Reginald P. C. Matter, 'The prompter and the puppets', *TLS*, 6 October 1961, p. 666.

<sup>115</sup> For a discussion of the context of publishing literary criticism see Stefan Collini, "'The Chatto List' Publishing literary criticism in mid-twentieth-century Britain', *Review of English Studies*, 63 (2012), 634–63.

Ford),<sup>116</sup> a large number of their former students wrote chapters for the project. *The Pelican Guide* was written for the growing number of sixth formers and English undergraduates at new universities who appreciated the direct social relevance of the subject, which the books amply provided. This section discusses two types of English School set up in the early 1960s, seeing them, in part, as a culmination of these social democratic visions of the English School.

In 1964, Richard Hoggart established the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, as a postgraduate research centre attached to the English department at Birmingham, with funds from Allen Lane at Penguin Books (Hoggart had been a key witness for Penguin Books during the 'Lady Chatterley' Trial) and David Astor at the Observer.<sup>117</sup> Though the Centre subsequently carried out a study of culture that took its cue from German and American sociological traditions, and later from continental Marxism, it was fully intended by Hoggart as a modified English School. The Centre sought to study contemporary culture by using developments in literary criticism, adopting Leavis and others' critical distance from (and resistance towards) the commercial culture of the press, television, and advertising. Hoggart addressed his inaugural lecture, *Schools of English and Contemporary Society* (1963), to the role which literature and culture played in contemporary social life. For Hoggart, the Centre sought to address a central question posed by Ezra Pound: 'Has literature a function in the state?'<sup>118</sup> In Hoggart's mind, it certainly did, and the Centre's purpose was to assess intersections and problems within contemporary culture and society: 'English, once again and finally, has to do with *language exploring human experience, in all its complexity and flux*. It is therefore always in an active relation with its age; and some students of literature ... ought to try to understand these relationships better'.<sup>119</sup>

The Centre ultimately fell short of Hoggart's grand ideals and increasingly distanced itself from English Literature as a whole. Under the directorship of

<sup>116</sup> Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 202–3; Boris Ford, 'Bill Williams and the Pelican Guide to English Literature' in *Pelican Books: a Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration*, ed. by Russell Edwards and Steve Hare (Np.: Penguin Collectors Society, 1997), p. 37; See also Brotherton, Leavis to Dobrée, 26 July 1948 criticizing Ford as a choice.

<sup>117</sup> Inglis, *Hoggart*, pp. 152–3.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Hoggart, *Schools of English and Contemporary Society* (Birmingham: Kynoch Press, 1963).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 18. [Hoggart's emphasis] Early projects included a social study of 1930s literary habits, using Orwell as a departure point; a wider study of 'the sociology of literature and the arts'; and a third, 'critical evaluative' study of mass art, popular culture, and the culture of mass media. *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: First Report* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1964), <<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/annual-reports/1964.pdf>>, [accessed 18 October 2015], esp. pp. 4–7.

Stuart Hall (1968–1979) and Richard Johnson (1979–1993), the Centre moved away from its roots within English to address crucial questions of race, gender, and class, which English Literature had previously neglected, and to conceive of culture in far-broader terms than even the most permissive Literature teacher would accept.<sup>120</sup> The tradition of socially committed English Literature still conformed to a paradigm largely unchanged since the early 1930s, which insisted that the study of a central canon of literary texts had an innate value which, if applied to wider society, could potentially address the problems of mass society, mass democracy, and mass culture. The Centre's interest in forms of culture as a 'way of life', or expression of the particular configuration of class and power, increasingly came to see the act of passing judgment on cultural forms and transmitting a corpus of works to a younger generation as elitist and outdated. The Birmingham English Faculty, sceptical of the Centre from the start, remained (with the exception of more adventurous academics such as David Lodge) dismissive of its aims and place within the University as did many in the Sociology Department.<sup>121</sup>

If the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies showed the successes and failings of going it alone, the Sussex English School was a model of cooperation and moderation. After Knights met David Daiches and the historian Asa Briggs at a British Council event in Hyderabad in the late 1950s, the three spent an enjoyable martini-fuelled evening discussing an outline for the new University at Sussex (founded 1961) and particularly its English School. The three 'concluded that a course on "Contemporary England" should be shared by students of literature and the social studies'.<sup>122</sup> Both Knights and Daiches expressed interest in the upcoming chair of English, though Knights later dropped out, going to Cambridge in 1965 as King Edward VII Professor of English Literature. Rejected by Leavis and his followers for perceived

<sup>120</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems' in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 190–1; Chris Weedon, 'Cultural Studies', in *CHLC: Volume ix: Twentieth Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 155–64; Norma Schulman, 'Conditions of their Own Making: An Intellectual History of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham' *Culture*, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 18 (1993), pp. 51–73.

<sup>121</sup> The former *Mass Observer*, Charles Madge, now a Professor of Sociology at Birmingham, was equally wary of the Centre, A. H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain: Science, Literature and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>122</sup> Asa Briggs, 'David Daiches and the Idea of a new University', in David Daiches, William Baker and Michael Lister, eds. (2008), pp. 21, 19–20, 26; John Calder, 'David Daiches: Obituary', *Guardian*, 18 July 2005. See also Asa Briggs, *Special Relationships: People and Places* (London: Frontline Books, 2012), pp. 118 and Plate 26 (a picture of Briggs, Knights, and Daiches in Hyderabad).

disloyalty, he was referred to in particular circles as 'Professor Judas', with Queenie Leavis calling him a 'traitor' to his face.<sup>123</sup> He was also perceived as too Leavisite by other faculty members and largely out of touch with the younger generation. Caught between a rock and a hard place of the various factions of the Cambridge English Department, his tenure at Cambridge was an unhappy and unproductive end to a career.<sup>124</sup>

David Daiches (1912–2005) had previously flirted with Marxism whilst studying at Edinburgh University during the 1930s.<sup>125</sup> From this came *Literature and Society* (1938), published by Victor Gollancz's *Left Book Club*. The book, which was instantly influential among many on the literary left and in adult education, called for a detailed examination of the social relations underpinning the production of literature. Daiches later recalled, rather dismissively that 'This at once gave me a left-wing reputation among the students, and I was invited to immeasurable political meetings where the best means of fighting fascism and such questions as the proper function of the arts in society were furiously debated'.<sup>126</sup> Retrospectively, Daiches viewed this period as one of striking naïvety, explaining it as a product of youthful exuberance and the climate of the 1930s.<sup>127</sup> Daiches attempted to downplay his foray into left-wing politics at Edinburgh, Oxford, and later Chicago where he published the overtly Marxist *The Novel and the Modern World* (1939), as embarrassing indiscretions in the life of an otherwise committed liberal, a Zionist, and an educational reformer.<sup>128</sup>

Though Daiches firmly distanced himself from any particular school of literary criticism and politics, he remained convinced of the importance of

<sup>123</sup> Boris Ford, 'Obituary: Professor L. C. Knights', *Independent*, 15 March 1997. Roy Shaw, 'How Many Children'. Knights resigned from the editorial board in 1947, as he no longer played any active part in the journal: L. C. Knights, 'Remembering *Scrutiny*', *Sewanee Review*, 89 (1981), 566–7, 583–5; David Ellis, *Memoirs of a Leavisite: The Decline and Fall of Cambridge English* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 79. David Rawlinson, suggests that, although he supported Knights as the least worst candidate for the Professorship, Leavis would have preferred D. J. Enright. 'Letters: Thank God for the Leavisites', *London Review of Books*, 7 November 2013, p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> Sn., 'The State of English III: University of Cambridge', *TLS*, 25 February 1972, pp. 215–6; See also letters by, among others, Knights and Leavis himself, who suggested that his former colleague had 'not only a negligible but deprecatory influence on *Scrutiny*', 'Letters: The State of English', *TLS*, 3 March 1972, p. 246 and 10 March 1972, p. 276.

<sup>125</sup> David Daiches, *A Third World* (London: University of Sussex Press, 1971), p. 1–2; Daiches, 'Whose War is it Anyway?', *London Review of Books*, 24 August 1995. Wallace Martin (2008), 'Criticism and the Academy' in *CHLC*, vii, 294; Gary Day, 'Literature and the institutional context', in *CHLC*, ix, 167–9.

<sup>126</sup> Daiches, *Third World*, p. 32, also p. 44.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>128</sup> William Barker, 'Introduction' in *David Daiches: A Celebration of His Life* (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2008), p. 4; Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics*, p. 145.

studying the role of literature in society, of the uses of history and sociology, and in particular of the central place of the 'English School' within the modern university. Alongside the 'Chicago Aristotelians' such as R. S. Crane and Wayne Booth he encountered in America, Daiches was also firmly appreciative of the work of Leavis and *Scrutiny*, which had certainly eased his move to Cambridge in 1951.<sup>129</sup> In approaching Daiches to set up the English School at Sussex, Briggs was consciously looking for someone who transcended the tribalism of both Marxist and anti-Marxist history (which Briggs rejected) as well as Leavisite and anti-Leavisite criticism. Their shared assumptions about the role of the university in society (held by other key academics at Sussex) reinforced the new approach to teaching English and the Humanities.<sup>130</sup> The curriculum, modelled on the Oxford Greats, sought to educate students in a variety of complimentary subjects, which led to the University being referred to as 'Balliol by the Sea'.<sup>131</sup>

In 'The Place of an English School in the Sussex Scheme', published in *The Idea of a New University* (1964), Daiches conceived of the Sussex English School as a place where the student would critically study English and European Literature, whilst combining it with other disciplines – primarily history and sociology – which would broaden the focus of the degree to a critical assessment of society. Daiches stressed that criticism was the sole means of mediating between disparate voices in society:

An English school must train its students to read with discrimination and appreciation. In an age where the 'mass media' are threatening standards on all sides, when the battle between highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow rages continually and 'popular' as applied to art is often taken to be synonymous with 'bad', a prime responsibility rests on the university to teach *critical appreciation*.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> David Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (London: Longmans, 1956) p. 279. See David Daiches, 'Two Decades of Hard Knocks and High Standards; End of "Scrutiny" the Immitigable Journal', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 December 1953 and correspondence by F. R. Leavis, 15 December; Paul Reed, 16 December; David Daiches 18 December; F. R. Leavis, 23 December.

<sup>130</sup> Matthew Cragoe, 'Asa Briggs and the University of Sussex, 1961–76', in *The Age of Asa: Lord Briggs, Public Life and History since 1945*, ed. by Miles Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 225–47.

<sup>131</sup> Roy Lowe, *Schooling and Social Change 1964–1990* (London: Routledge, 1997); David Reisman, 'Notes on New Universities: American and Britain', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 20 (1966), pp. 128–46.

<sup>132</sup> David Daiches, 'The Place of an English School in the Sussex Scheme', *Idea of a New University: An Experiment in Sussex*, ed. by David Daiches (London: A. Deutsch, 1964), p. 89.



Daiches required students of English Literature to be informed by history and sociologists, and crucially to be taught by historians and sociologists.<sup>133</sup> The Sussex 'Core and Context' model sought 'to resolve the conflict between literary criticism and literary history', which had been a stumbling block for years, and to provide 'students trained, *both* in evaluative techniques and in historical understanding'.<sup>134</sup> Daiches ran a popular joint seminar with Asa Briggs on 'The late-Victorian revolt', a combined study of history and literature taking its cue from Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958) and Briggs' own *Age of Improvement* (1959).<sup>135</sup>

The Sussex English School sought to resist the pressures of specialization, which had provoked the notorious 'Two Cultures' debate raging at Cambridge, in favour of creating a more rounded undergraduate capable of facing the demands of a Britain, characterized by technological modernity and managed capitalism. Its students were required to 'learn how to come to terms with their own culture and with their own past, how to clarify their minds, refine their sensibilities and equip themselves to confront the bewildering phenomena of modern civilization'.<sup>136</sup> The success of the Sussex model, which influenced the development of syllabuses at other newly founded 'Plateglass' Universities at East Anglia, Essex, Kent, and Warwick,<sup>137</sup> was due to its openness and flexibility and to the willingness of academics from different departments – Daiches in English, Briggs in History, and Boris Ford in Education – to work together in creating courses which moved beyond established disciplinary boundaries, yet without dispensing with the humane ideal behind education.<sup>138</sup>

### Critical Faculties: The English School in the 1960s and Beyond

Dobrée, Bateson, Knights, and Daiches envisaged the position of the departmental English academic as a pillar of the community: as public lecturer, adult education tutor, commentator in local newspapers, social and political organizer, and general spokesman for art and education. The optimism of the

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, pp. 91–2.

<sup>134</sup> Daiches, 'Place of an English School', p. 94. See Angus Ross, 'David Daiches: A Founding Dean of the University of Sussex', in *David Daiches: A Celebration of His Life and Work*, William Baker and Michael Lister, eds. (2008), pp. 140–6; Norman Vance, 'English', in *Making the Future: a History of the University of Sussex*, ed. by Fred Gray (Brighton: University of Sussex, 2011), pp. 245–8.

<sup>135</sup> Asa Briggs, 'David Daiches and the Idea of a new University', in *David Daiches*, pp. 21, 19–20, 26.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>137</sup> Lowe, *Schooling and Social Change*, pp. 72–4.

<sup>138</sup> Briggs, 'Idea of a new university', p. 24; Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy', *CHLC*, vii, 318–9; Day, 'Literature and the Institutional Context', *CHLC*, ix, 169–70;

1960s produced an inevitable backlash against these visions for an English School, both from the Marxist left and conservative right. English Literature was challenged from a Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial perspective as elitist, parochial, and idealist. The new critic that emerged in the 1960s was a part of the new globalized research community (memorably described in David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975)), where scholars increasingly looked abroad – not just for theory and ideas – but for journal collaborators, visiting fellowships, archives, and conferences, and above all literature.<sup>139</sup>

All the critics of this article, from Hoggart to Leavis, believed that the study of literature could impart a form of morality which could potentially improve society and teach people how to communicate and live better with one another. With a few exceptions such as O.E.L., or the Open University's English Department founded in 1970 by Graham Martin and Arnold Kettle,<sup>140</sup> conceptions of the English School from the 1960s tended to set themselves in opposition to the educational and social reforms provided by the postwar welfare state. C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson, who edited the *Critical Quarterly* (1959–) and *Critical Survey* (1962–), along with regular contributors such as Malcolm Bradbury, G.H. Bantock, and David Holbrook called for a reassertion of the moral values of literature in the face of an increasingly permissive laissez-faire society where cultural authority was being undermined.<sup>141</sup> *Critical Quarterly* was intended to appeal to a broader audience of schoolteachers at the forefront of the educational revolution, yet its pages were steeped in pessimism and reaction against over-experimentation in the classroom and the attempts to broaden, or rather dissolve, the subject into wider cultural or media studies.<sup>142</sup>

In 1962, the *Critical Survey*'s inaugural issue began with a survey of English university teaching under the general heading 'The Idea of an English School'. Cox himself was sceptical of teaching far greater numbers of a younger generation – of ostensibly lower intellectual capability, for whom

<sup>139</sup> Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role?: The United Kingdom, 1951–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 358–65

<sup>140</sup> Graham Martin, 'Teaching literature in the Open University' in *Re-Reading English*, ed. by Peter Widdowson (London, 1992), pp. 91–104.

<sup>141</sup> Doyle, *English*, pp. 115–8, 120–4; Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, pp. 117–22; Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties 1960–75* (London: Meuthen, 1986), pp. 195–6; Brian Cox, *The Great Betrayal* (London: Chapmans, 1992); C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson, 'Literary Criticism', in *The Twentieth Century Mind: History, Ideas, and Literature in Britain*, C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson, eds. volume 3: 1945–65 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 440–3, 460. Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, D. J. Enright and others contributed to early numbers, though ultimately withdrew support as the journal became increasingly reactionary.

<sup>142</sup> Carol Atherton, 'Public Intellectuals and the Schoolteacher Audience: The First Ten Years of the *Critical Quarterly*', *English*, 58 (2009), 75–94.

English Literature was merely a pastime, or an easy means of gaining a degree.<sup>143</sup> Cox noted that few of the undergraduates he taught read for pleasure or, if they did, it was not the classics of English Literature but the voguish American or French authors such as Jack Kerouac and Albert Camus, rather than overlooked figures of lasting status.<sup>144</sup> Cox invited essays and remarks by a variety of academics representing the majority of British universities including John Butt, C.L. Mowatt, Kenneth Muir, Geoffrey Tillotson, and Ian Watt, as well as Bateson, Daiches, Dobrée, and Knights. Overwhelmingly, these contributors disagreed with Cox's pessimism and instead welcomed many of the recent developments within English Studies at their particular faculties, suggesting how particular changes and policies could continue the general direction of earlier limited reforms.<sup>145</sup> With some reservations, English Literature academics welcomed the expansion in student numbers, new currents of thought, and the increasing tendency of viewing English as one of many ways of approaching the problems of the contemporary world. Despite Cox's reservations, the overall mood of the early 1960s was a cautious welcome of the new status quo in English, where university expansion and reform had permitted significant changes within the teaching of English.<sup>146</sup>

The idea of the English School from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s was above all an attempt to think through the links between culture, education, and society by academics deeply aware of the vital social role of literature. For critics who had experienced both the economic and political crisis of the 1930s and the Second World War, the values of literature – or rather the experience of an education in English Literature – were able to shape the minds of citizens capable of creating a better, more egalitarian society, capable of dealing with technology and rapid change, in which proper thought and good writing triumphed over the cant and misinformation put forwards by newspapers, advertisers, and politicians. Though these visions of School and society went largely unfulfilled in an institutional context, the figures discussed in this article influenced tens of thousands of schoolteachers, adult

<sup>143</sup> In this, he was consciously echoing Kingsley Amis's claim, with regards to student numbers, that 'MORE WILL MEAN WORSE' Kingsley Amis, 'Lone Voices: Views of the Fifties', *Encounter*, 15 (1960), p. 8; Whyte, *Redbrick*, p. 243.

<sup>144</sup> C. B. Cox, 'English in the New Universities: The Teaching Problem', *Critical Survey*, 1 (1962), p. 41.

<sup>145</sup> F. W. Bateson, 'The Indispensable Weekly Essay' *Critical Survey*, 1 (1962), 57–60; David Daiches, 'English Studies at the University of Sussex', *Critical Survey*, 1 (1962), p. 52; Knights, 'English at Bristol', p. 183. See also, L. C. Knights, 'Modern Literary Theory: Its Place in Teaching', *TLS*, 6 February 1981, p. 136.

<sup>146</sup> For an excellent discussion of university expansion and academic attitudes see Whyte, *Redbrick*, pp. 229–47.

education tutors, sociologists, arts administrators, social workers, theatre directors, civil servants, poets, politicians, journalists, novelists, and, of course, English academics. It was on their backs that a better, more equal society would, or would not, be built. The English School of this period, as conceived by Knights, Dobrée, Daiches, and Bateson, sought above all to create the graduates capable of transforming society through their appreciation of the power of literature and of language. As Dobrée wrote in his *Critical Survey* piece: 'The thing is to tell every student who has done well in his finals, "Well you are now ready to start a study of English literature". The intelligent ones appreciate the remark'.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, 'The Teaching of English Literature: A Personal Confession', *Critical Survey*, 1 (1962), p. 56.