# Where Home is Hell: Grapholects of the Apocalypse

**Catherine Morris**

## The Veil of Standard English

Unable to find a consistent translation for the word *unheimlich* in his essay, *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud places language itself as foremost amongst the uncanny and points to the potential for language to be either 'public' or 'secret.' The dictionary meanings of *heimlich* in German are paradoxical, meaning both a place of familiar cosiness, but one which is simultaneously "concealed, kept hidden, so that others do not get to know of it" (Freud 2003 [1919]: 129). He demonstrates how *heimlich* "merges with its antonym" to show "where public ventilation has to cease, secret machination begins" (134, 130). As a result of this ambiguity, we can already note the obscurity of language and its potential for multiple interpretations, misunderstandings, and secrecy, along with a sense of belonging within languages that are known to us, and of being outside those that are unfamiliar. 'Public language' evokes notions of a 'national language', which Norman Fairclough jokes may be defined as "a dialect with an army and a navy," symbolic of a single, sovereign nation; "in Britain, they generally have in mind British *standard* English" (Fairclough 1989: 21). Thus, dialects, without military power and the legitimacy this infers, are the opposite of the national language; spoken only at home, or in secret behind closed doors, by those unable to reach the standard or who choose not to. Categorising non-standardised forms of language in British writing as dialects is loaded with historical and socio-political judgements and difficulties from the outset; doing so reduces all language variations outside of standard English as cruder or primitive deviations from one 'pure' overriding English Language, disregarding any awareness of the way all languages evolve alongside ever-changing cultural behaviours. Despite this, dialects, or as rendered in writing, grapholects, are still a useful tool in literature to locate a story in a particular region, situation, or time, signifying character, class, or a distinctly personal way of life. Its presentation as different to standard English, however, suggests the existence of a veil between the public and private spheres, and thus something to be concealed: a lack of social status, money, and/or education, or else a sense of instability or untrustworthiness, compared to the superior and reliable standard English. As such, dialects may be considered defective, of no value or use, or in a word, waste.

Home languages often appear illegible, becoming other and incorrect on the page, while standard English, though not the prevailing dialect spoken at home, is more familiar,

less threatening, and so accepted as correct in print. Welcoming a standardized form of language into the home as print, rather than the everyday language spoken there, further reinforces the Freudian sense of the *unheimlich*, where the unfamiliar is made familiar. Subsequently, the use of grapholects is confronting, provoking anxieties of divergence from the standard, threatening human regression or societal degeneration which, like waste, the supreme example of which being death, should be rejected. In this article, I will consider how the use of British working class grapholects in "A Story of the Days to Come" (1899) by H. G. Wells, and *Riddley Walker* (1980) by Russell Hoban, despite being written nearly a century apart, act as consistent uncanny signifiers of hellish future underworlds, resultant of using dialects instead of adhering to the accepted standard, and defining the chaotic dystopian wastelands that await us if we don't. In Hoban, discarded language remnants litter the landscape of the page, dug up and returned to us, disfigured and forbidding, like "an extract from a very backward child's exercise book" (Filmer 1992: 59), or else, in Wells, the decaying home language of the Underways is buried once more after his characters leave their "nightmare [… back] towards the sunlight" (Wells 1989 [1899]: Locations 2903). This device reveals the underlying source of the uncanniness of dialect in literature as the legitimacy of only one social class from which most people are cut off from, but the reality of which is hidden beneath a veil of standardisation.

The act of veiling is referred to by Freud as "'that [which] was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open,' […] 'To veil the divine and surround it with an aura of the uncanny'" (Freud: 132). Jane Marie Todd remarks that in searching for the source of the uncanny, however, Freud himself exposes and conceals again some of the discoveries he makes: "One suspects that he had himself repressed something, that if he failed to see the meaning of the Unheimliche, it is because he averted his eyes" (Todd 1986: 521). Todd observes that unveiling and more importantly re-veiling is essential to understanding the idea of what the uncanny is: "the reappearance of something that has been disavowed" (524). The reader, therefore, gazes through the veil of standardisation, with all the prejudices and structures imposed by the standard, as though, by meeting it, we are all the same and have the same access to the type of society the standard represents. By lifting this veil using grapholects, the gaze of the discarded social classes is returned, and so too the uncanniness of an imposed standard English revealed, requiring the reader to challenge these conventions and their own biases, and so too to better know themselves.

**Wells: Veiling the Divine and Burying those "Underneath"**

Heidegger argues that intrinsic aspects of our being, and the "affectations [of our] soul" are made manifest through our diverse, individual voices, ways of speaking and, by extension, the representation of such in writing (Heidegger 1993: 400). In going further than simply giving voice to his characters therefore, by "showing" (1993: 400-413), in written representation, the sounds their voices make, Wells evokes more than what is said and holds aloft the "braces and supports of the construction" of society, allowing the reader to "apprehend" depth of character, a sense of place and belonging, and all the privileges or restrictions of class, education, money, and the freedom of movement through life they each respectively infer (1993: 401).[1] In my reading of Wells, I will consider how the author first brings concerns about social division to the surface of the text using both upper and lower class grapholects, before concealing them once more with standard English.

In "A Story of the Days to Come," Wells follows characters of a privileged background living above ground in glass-encased cities, before taking a "plunge […] more terrible than death" (loc. 1707-12) to join the drudgery of the labourers in the Underways. Wells takes pains to describe language-use in his future world to draw attention to its importance from the outset, as the narrator describes (but does not initially show) how those above ground speak in a way apparently unchanged from the end of the nineteenth century:

> In spite of the intervening space of time, the English language was still almost exactly the same as it had been in England under Victoria the Good. The invention of the phonograph and suchlike means of recording sound, and the gradual replacement of books by such contrivances, had not only saved the human eyesight from decay, but had also by the establishment of a sure standard arrested the process of change in accent that had hitherto been so inevitable.
>
> (Wells 1989: loc.1371)

Whilst Wells appears, so far, to have protected the spoken English language of the upper classes from degradation, the written word has perished as "old fashioned nonsense" (loc.1392). The phonograph is now the principal purveyor of discourse, leading to a deafness among the masses instead of the oft-depicted myopia of avid nineteenth-century readers. This satirical illustration implies how the over-amplifying of a standard spoken language could lead to a "deaf ear" to all other voices, just as the standardisation of English in the written form has rendered dialect forms of language invisible in print. Despite this observation, through the course of his story, Wells silences the non-standard voices, resetting clear

boundaries and restoring linguistic order to the chaos he exposes. Wells' inclusion of upper-class orthography within the text at all is notable, as Sylvia Hardy (2003) discusses, but more interesting for me is the way in which it is only briefly and inconsistently used at the start, in names and advertisements. For example, the aural primacy hitherto described, initially places an attendant necessity on the written word, when used publicly, to be presented phonetically, in names like "Elizabeθ Mwres" (Elizabeth Morris) (loc. 1442) and in flame inscriptions tossed at shoppers in the streets like flyers: "*ets r chip t'de*" ("hats are cheap today") (loc. 2091). Hardy (2003: 199-212) wonders whether the dropped *h* and fronting of /æ/ in "hats" is a joke aimed at the late Victorian upper classes, a hypercorrection to the "allowed" dropped *h* of Received Pronunciation, as opposed to the derided dropped *h* of Wells' own Cockney, so evident elsewhere in the story:

> "Im wiv his nose coloured red," said the anæmic woman. The little girl began to cry, and Elizabeth could have cried too.
>
> "Ain't 'e kickin' 'is legs!—just!" said the anæmic woman in blue, trying to make things bright again. "Looky—now!"
>
> On the façade to the right a huge intensely bright disc of weird colour span incessantly, and letters of fire that came and went spelt out—
>
> "Does this make you Giddy?" Then a pause, followed by "Take a Purkinje's Digestive Pill." (loc. 2146)

The difference in this woman's speech, and so her class, is made clear through recognisable linguistic markers: in addition to the disallowed version of the *h* dropping already mentioned, /θ/ becomes /v/ in "with" to illustrate the use of the *th*-fronting that contemporary readers of Wells would have accepted as Cockney, as well as the 'ain't' contraction. Conversely, the written advertisement in this scene is presented in standard English, unlike the previous inscription of the Suzannah Hat Syndicate, in Received Pronunciation presented phonetically. The upper classes, like Mwres, having had the benefit of "modern school" teachings (loc. 1393), would likely only recognise the written word in its modernised phonetically transfigured form of Received Pronunciation if they bother to read at all. It seems unlikely that this Purkinje's advertisement is aimed at the Underways people, written in the "old" standard English way they *might* still recognise but do not speak, since they have no money with which to buy digestive aids. Furthermore, if the upper classes no longer need to bother to learn to read, it seems unlikely that the underclass would be taught at all, which renders the

advertisement rather pointless, except as a device to contrast the woman's dialect voice against a coherent and clearly written standard. Even the phonetic spelling of Elizabeθ is abandoned in favour of its more recognisable form after only one mention, the phonetic symbol of the voiceless dental fricative concealed once more by standard English. All other instances of the way those "top-side" (loc. 2381) speak are written in standard English, the only exception being the family name, Mwres, which is spelt this way throughout. Yet, through such phonetic glimpses, such brief unveilings, the reader hears how upper-class characters sound, and they are just as unusual, idiosyncratic, and hard to read or pronounce as the transliteration of dialect speech. In fact, for those with little to no knowledge of phonetics, their obscurity is even more pronounced. Received Pronunciation is just as unhomely an accent to those not of a middle- to upper-class upbringing as regional "rough" speak is to those who are, and yet it is only the working-class dialect that is consistently depicted throughout the story in a non-standard form.

Though Wells' brief depiction of language "up top" is not considered an advancement of the English language, it is not exploited to the same extent as the Underways grapholects, and the prompt reversion to all upper-class characters' speech in standard English is taken for granted. The sustained portrayed dialect of only one community of speakers (the Underways), characterising a poverty of speech or a sullying of language on their part, when contrasted with the other community (those "up top"), whose differences and difficulties in true representation have *also* been illustrated only to be disregarded immediately, allows the reader to identify more closely with the upper-classes through the normalising effect of standard English.

Meanwhile, Wells disinters the grapholect of the Underways like the corpse in Kristeva, as

> the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. […] It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.
>
> (Kristeva 1982: 4-5)

Having led his readers across the unhealthy border by going "Underneath" (loc. 2326), the abject nature of the Underways grapholect is "elaborated through [our] failure to recognise [it as] kin; [not] familiar, not even a shadow of a memory" (4-5), despite it being "a later development of the Cockney dialect" (loc. 2184) that at least many British readers would

recognize aurally. The longer Wells' characters stay, the more they are infected by this deathly existence. Underways citizens "talked vociferously" (loc. 2187) and display few redeeming features; they are pitiful, sickly, and morose, salacious gossips with a "cultivated […] foolish coarseness of speech" (loc. 2268), prone to spite and idle violence. As we follow the despairing Elizabeth and Denton down into the Labour Company, we watch the process of dehumanising take place. Ruined, they are forced to into the Underways, to wear the indistinguishable uniform of the underclass, and take part in their monotonous manual work and daily beatings. Denton's first aggressor, Blunt, takes pity on him and offers to teach him how to fight. Blunt's difficulty with articulation does not conceal the magnanimity and dignity with which he attempts to make amends with the condescending Denton after their initial misunderstanding:

> "Lemme show you 'ow to scrap. Jest lemme. You're ig'nant, you ain't no class; but you might be a very decent scrapper—very decent. Shown. That's what I meant to say."
>
> Denton hesitated.
>
> "But—" he said, "I can't give you anything—"
>
> "That's the ge'man all over," said the swart man. "Who arst you to?"
>
> "But your time?"
>
> "If you don't get learnt scrapping you'll get killed,—don't you make no bones of that."
>
> Denton thought.
>
> "I don't know," he said. He looked at the face beside him, and all its native coarseness shouted at him. He felt a quick revulsion from his transient friendliness. It seemed to him incredible that it should be necessary for him to be indebted to such a creature. (loc. 2516-2525)

Only when Denton accepts the instruction and, after some weeks of practice, is faced with having to use his newfound fighting skills upon a new tormentor, does he finally feel as though "he was a man in a world of men" (loc. 2624-5) who could survive and belong. Elizabeth does not share Denton's manly renaissance and cannot accept the life to which he has succumbed. Thankfully, they are saved by the original architect of their woes, her wealthy but vindictive former suitor, and leave their nightmare behind, albeit through no effort of their own, but rather the money, status, and influence of the men in charge, saving

them, and the reader, from further contamination and decay. Wells rejects the Underways, restores the boundary and rules, and re-veils what he had exposed, casting standard English over his grapholect like earth over the dead. In so doing, Wells presents an unveiling after all: the swindle of standard language, exposed through its unbalanced conformation and inconsistent use, and its ultimate lack of importance when your lot in life is determined by the possession of money and status.

Wells' interest in language arose from having felt the need to supress his own working-class accent to be accepted and have success as both scientist and writer (Hardy 2003: 199-212). He attempts to show that linguistic indolence in whatever social sphere, particularly decreased exposure to written language, leads to the breakdown of human intellect and sympathy and, through the inability to communicate successfully with each other at all, the eventual downfall of the human race:

> [A] dialect, a code of thought, a language of "culture," which aimed by a sedulous search after fresh distinction to widen perpetually the space between itself and "vulgarity." The bond of a common faith, moreover, no longer held the race together. (loc. 2340)

Vindication again for standardisation. But while Victorian concern for the working poor is detectable through the text, Wells' sympathy for the people of the Underways does not extend beyond the individual "noble savage" character of Blunt. Todd's essay concerning veiling/unveiling in Freud is relevant here, as by lifting the veil only briefly, Wells represses the very issues he raises, concealing dialect once more in standard language, and in so doing upholds the status quo:

> In the first example, the *Unheimliche* is the unveiling that should not have taken place; in the second case, something, the divine (?), is veiled in *Unheimlichkeit*. And, as with the heimlich/unheimlich pair, the double movement of veiling/unveiling will become a significant example of coherence in contradiction. […] Unable to see what the veil hides, unable to reveal the Unheimliche, he has only managed to catch a glimpse of the truth before throwing the veil over it once again. (1986: 521-2)

Wells silences the people of the Underways by leaving them "Underneath," protecting his characters and the reader from any further exposure to the degraded language that should never have been seen or heard in the first place. Instead of promoting healthy diversity within his linguistic endeavours, he shows the Underways to be just as hellish as expected, and its bestial people, monotonous and meaningless work, and defective, undesirable language, become landfill, mere by-products to be discarded after use. For those who call it home, it is inescapable. Wells does not save Blunt, despite his gallant nature, from the " – endless – endless […] snapping and snarling, snapping and snarling, generation after generation," (1989: loc. 2562-4).

Using Todd's second case, we see how Wells is quick to throw the veil over his upper-class grapholect. Wells disguises the extreme phonetics he fleetingly allows the reader to perceive with the more uniform and friendlier façade of standard English. This more accessible, everyman language creates an illusion; that it is representative of "normal" people, and that its associated aspirational ways of living are achievable for all if only we would conform to this standard. The brief glimpses of his patrician orthography reveal that the differences are much greater than the standard admits, "divine" as Todd calls it, and that the god-like ways of living, with "a roof space and a balcony upon the city wall, wide open to the sun and wind, the country and the sky" (loc. 2914-16), are not at all as accessible, achievable, or "standard," as the veiling suggests. Rather, it is dependent on the will of the "gods." Wells' protagonists, the middle-class characters we are to identify with, are saved through the money and status they were briefly cut-off from for not following the patriarchal class rules of their society. Upon realising the error of their ways, they are miraculously bestowed once more with the manna of civilisation.

Standard English was assimilated throughout the nineteenth century,[2] as the more equitable, functional, and recognisable language, masking differences as though none exist, or at least suggesting they would no longer continue to exist if all made the effort to be the same and to follow the dominant narrative. The non-standard dialects of Wells' story, therefore, are uncanny, representing the voice of the "other", whether that of the "hellish" lower or "divine" upper classes, with standard English becoming an unpolluted earthly middle ground, with the promise of something better hereafter.[3] However, when the middle ground is reachable only if efforts are made to meet the minimum expectations of those in superior standing, the 'gods', it becomes unclear who owns the language, and the space it inhabits. As such, standard English itself is the more precarious space where no one is ever

completely at home, or, even more unstable, the uncanny veil which distorts the reader's view of home as a wasteland, and our home languages as waste.

### ***Riddley Walker*: Unearthing the *Unheimlich* of Dialect in Creative Writing**

Freud references being "buried alive, only apparently dead," and "the return of the dead" (2003: 150, 154), as supremely uncanny. If Wells conceals the social issues he raises by burying the Underways folk alive "Underneath" standard ideas of propriety, society, and language in order to avoid a hell on earth, Hoban's characters claw their way out of the apocalyptic waste to find they are in, and of, this hell, cut off from the gods of civilisation that once existed, theirs the only voices left:

> Them air boats as never come back. Becaws them as got a way to the space stations they jus done ther dying out there in stead of down here. Now here we stan and singing our song to bern our dead. No 1 coming back to get us out of this. Onlyes way wewl get out of it is to dy out of it. (Hoban 2012 [1980]: 23)

The "soar vivers" (121) of Inland speak for themselves through the first-person narrative of Hoban's eponymous young protagonist. The American author presents a small corner of future England in a post-nuclear world, and exhumes the stunted, disjointed, and transmogrified remains of twentieth-century English language through his fictional grapholects. Critical discussion of the novel is impossible without referring to the outwardly chaotic and uncertain duality of his Riddleyspeak grapholect itself, of its construction in the present while characterising the future, as many authors have written about before (see Abberley (2014), Dowling (1988), Maynor and Patteson (1984), Mullen (2000), Taylor (1989) among others). The visibly childlike transliteration is perhaps unsurprising from a writer whose work "always endorsed the child's viewpoint for its anarchic challenge to adult ways of doing things" (Dowling 1988: 179). Just as Riddley exhumes mummified twentieth-century children from the muck, "bodys and parts of bodys from time back way back" (72), Hoban points the reader to the source of Riddleyspeak's "strange accents and nonsense words" in the voices "of the children I went to school with in Pennsylvania [who] spoke that way: 'I been there' and 'I done that'" (2012: 225), unearthing those "only apparently dead" (2003: 150) voices once more. The exposure and return of these voices is not sufficient to explain its uncanny effect on the reader, however, as Freud notes, "we adapt our judgement to the condition of the writer's fictional reality" (2003: 156). This may reasonably extend to

the use of dialect; if mutations and primitivisms of people and place are acceptable, so too, presumably, are those of language, and "the ghostly apparitions" of dialect should be "no more uncanny than, say, the serene world of" standard English (2003: 156). So Riddleyspeak should not, according to Freud, produce an uncanny effect unless it "derives from repressed complexes […] remain[ing] as uncanny in literature as it is in real life" (157). I propose that Hoban's grapholect does expose such uncanny notions where, in Freud, the repressed childhood "fear of going blind, is quite often a substitute for the fear of castration" (2003, 138), substituted in Hoban by the fear of losing one's voice, and being cut-off from society, the "dreaded father, at whose hands castration is expected" (140).

Freudian symbolisms of repression abound in *Riddley Walker*, and can be read more directly from Hoban's grapholect. Jeffrey Porter considers puns, that dominate the mutated Riddleyspeak grapholect, "the locus of strangeness," where "language […] knows more than its users," and how we, in our "privileged position of the reader," see in the language what the characters cannot (Porter 1990: 456-8). Hoban's grapholect simultaneously represents seeing and not-seeing, knowing and not-knowing, and so canny/uncanny; these dualities replicate the double movement of veiling and unveiling that Todd presents as the "central concerns" of Freud's uncanny: "closely associated with the castration complex, a repressed syndrome that is certain to cause an *unheimlich* sensation when it resurfaces […] and its relation to seeing and being seen" (1986: 522). Yet it simultaneously concerns the distress of finding oneself lost in a seemingly automated world of ersatz identities, "made up of stereotypes that are bound to seem cultured" (1982: 49), and of dominant agendas that we do not own, cut-off from the child we once were, the discoveries we once made for ourselves, and, ultimately, the home we once had, with "unintentional returns" (2003: 144) to this home resulting from this distress.

In relation to Freud's reading of E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1816), Todd states that in focussing only on the oedipal concern the protagonist, Nathaniel, has for the loss of his sight at the hands of the titular character, he disregards the doll, Olympia, (who is central to Jentsh's theory of the uncanny), and so too "the question of woman [that] is inextricably connected to Nathaniel's fear of castration" (1986: 523). Todd's discussion on eyes and dolls is useful here, but in *Riddley Walker*, Olympia and her eyes are substituted for the Punch puppet and his voice. Todd first highlights the ways in which Freud considers Olimpia only as Nathaniel's double, the loss of her eyes corresponding to his own fear of loss or lack, in a symbolic "father-son conflict" (1986: 523). The struggle for manly supremacy is also evident in *Riddley Walker* through the equivalent use of voice, with puppets acting as prostheses for

that voice. Yet Todd's subsequent discussion concerning Olimpia as female, and so *unheimlich* and social other to Nathaniel, is also instructive in its relation to 'other' voices, particularly if we equate dialect with 'mother tongue', "either because the sight of [dialect] provokes the male's fear of castration, or because the woman's gaze reminds men of the "valuable and fragile thing" they fear to lose, or because the "desire to be female resurfaces as a fear of death" (1986: 527).

First Todd demonstrates that the removal, and so discovery of the absence, of Olimpia's eyes is tantamount to the discovery of female "lack," and affirmation of the (male) fear of castration, i.e. that of social oppression: "[s]he is denied life, power, and autonomy, all symbolized by the eye/penis" (1986: 525). Hoban replicates this discovery when Riddley unearths the blackened Punch doll from the mud, a voiceless uncanny double of the official Eusa puppet that speaks to the people on behalf of the governing *Mincer*y. In order to not be cut off from, and to actively take place in his society, Riddley must seek a voice with which to fill the void of self-knowing and self-love (primary narcissism), and to then share it with others in order to have it reflected back to him from his external world (secondary narcissism), (Freud, 1914). Choosing to speak with the ungoverned voice, i.e. his own voice speaking through Punch, rather than the official voice of the state speaking through Eusa, is the returned female gaze, "the castrating look" (1986: 527), through which Riddley risks social exclusion and loss of power for not meeting the 'standard'.

Todd's discussion on the simultaneously life-giving and life-taking nature of the returned female gaze (536), is also demonstrated through Hoban's grapholect, where Riddleys's ungoverned voice via Punch, rather than leading to social exclusion, gives voice to his fellow citizens; while reducing Eusa, like standard English, to an automaton of mechanical repetition. He thus gives the ungoverned voice "the power of death, of taking away life or of stealing the penis" (*Ibid*).

**Seeing/Unseeing/Being Seen: Dialect as 'Memberment'**

Returning to Porter's focus on the Riddleyspeak puns to uncover what the language itself says, phrases such as *reveal*, *connexion*, *seakerts*, and *memberment*, point the reader to the importance of seeing / unseeing / being seen in Riddley's world. *Memberment* is foremost among them, implying not only the attempts of the people of Inland to recall past events and knowledge (remember), but also to know what is part of them and constitutes their being (member), and to what group or groups they belong to (membership), whilst concurrently indicating how they are cut off from all of that previous knowledge, themselves, and each

other (dismember). Cut off as they are, the few words that remain from the twentieth century hold no direct meaning for them. Ghosts of old dialects and technological jargon materialise in the Inlanders speech, which they cannot fully utilise or interact with, but still feel, like phantom limbs. In order to remake the lost *connexion*, to interact with words and the world they have lost, Inlanders try to "span [the] bridge" between "saying" and "speech" (Heidegger 1993: 412) in other ways, namely through the Eusa stories and puppet shows. But Eusa speaks only with the singular official voice of the governing *Mincery*. Cowart (1989: 89) discusses how the use of the term *Mincery* points not only to the violence of the age (the way meat is cut up), and the managing of resources no doubt spread too thinly (again, similarly, mincing helps the meat go further), but also to homophobic pejoratives used since the fifteenth century, often attributed to politicians and other well-spoken men, as well as to the trait of circumlocution.[4] With only one official line of knowledge descent available to them, Inlanders only hear the official *Mincery* message delivered by authorised "speakers" such as the *Pry Mincer*, Goodparley; they are unlikely to beget new lines of thought with such a limited pool of ideas, endlessly circulating around and stagnating within the same people. As such, the Inlanders are "robbed of [their voices]" (Freud 2003: 138) by the governing 'father', and, for fear of being cut-off entirely from the official voice, the only known source of knowledge-power, they are left to replicate the same Eusa words for generations:

> Goodparley give me the nod and I stood up for the show talk. Same as my dad in his time and his dad befor him.
>
> I said, "Weare going aint we."
>
> The crowd said, "Yes weare going." (2012: 44)

After his first outing as *Connexion Man* for the *Mincery*, Riddley is criticised in his new role:

> "[…] you do your 1st connexion and you come up with Eusas head is dreaming us. Which it is if you keap on connecting them cow shit shows and pontsing for the Ram which thats all it is and you know it. […] Leave the telling to the women and connect with a mans doing." (64-65)

The dual use of *pontsing* ('poncing' in British slang, *OED*) makes Riddley an employed pimp of the *Mincery*, living off the word of Eusa instead of his own, whilst also, like *Mincery*,

having disparaging undertones of effeminacy, in both the sexual and civic sense. These meanings are projected onto Riddley who, a puppet like the Eusa doll, has the *Mincery*'s hand inside him, moving and directing him, and the *Mincery's* voice speaking through him. By also likening Riddley's delivery of the *Mincery's* message to that of a *Tel-woman*, the female clairvoyants of the villages who have no official power, Riddley is charged by his accuser with "doing", that is showing himself, by seeing, and being seen, and so having a presence in public life: "Man himself acts [handelt] through the hand [Hand]; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man" (Kittler (1999): 198). But Riddley is no Eusa showman, and has no puppet of his own, so remains cut off.

Enter Punch; at this stage, the unknown and shadowy disfigured double of Eusa, dug up from the mud along with the severed hand of his long dead puppet master still inside, "cut off jus a littl way up the rist" (2012: 72). Without a live hand, exhumed Punch is inanimate, and without a voice he cannot speak, but Riddley has no words of his own to fill him with. Next, Riddley unearths the boy, Lissener, whose manifesto makes the case for the importance of listening to, and so keeping alive, unheard voices, to avoid their being consumed by the louder, authorised and more dominant voice: "What is spoken derives in manifold ways from the unspoken, whether in the form of the not yet spoken or of what has to remain unspoken – in the sense that it is denied speech" (Heidegger 1993: 407). Upon hearing this, Riddley replaces the severed hand briefly with his own inside the blackened Punch, but is still unsure how to use it or what to say. It is not until Goodparley exhibits his own untarnished Punch to Riddley, complete with disturbing high-pitched swazzle, does he first hear the ungoverned voice of Punch. Goodparley is excommunicated by the Eusa folk, "'Iwl have the sylents'" (2012: 180), no longer allowed to speak officially on behalf of Eusa or the *Mincery*, but his continued pursuit of power, for which he was cut-off originally, results swiftly in his death, leaving proud, colourful Punch, complete with swazzle, to Riddley. Having learned to be both speaker (Goodparley) and listener (Lissener) "simultaneously," instead of being "customarily set in opposition to one another" (Heidegger 1993: 410-11), Riddley "advance[s]" to finally become a fully-fledged showman in his own right, *his* hand inside Punch and able to speak for himself. With his prosthesis attached, his body and voice are made whole again, visible for all to see, and hear, thus mending the castration metaphor of lacking his voice.

**Seeing/Unseeing/Being Seen: Dialect as "Mêm̂e"**

Riddley's "self-showing" (1993: 410) gives the Inlanders more than a simple restoration of some lost official paternal line or return to good order, however. If this had been the case, he would have taken Eusa on the road to further pursue the quest for knowledge and power, not anarchic Punch with his fried "swossages" and threats of infanticide (2012: 217). Hoban's sole use of grapholect instead of standard English in his novel, like Riddley choosing Punch's voice over Eusa's in his shows, indicates instead Freud's "unintentional returns" to our own singular voices:

> the harking back to single phases in the evolution of the sense of self, a regression to times when the ego had not yet clearly set itself off against the world outside and from others. (2003: 193)

Through Riddleyspeak, Hoban reminds readers to question their own *memberment*: who "owns" the language they use, what is their "kinship with language" (1993: 423-425), and how ultimately it is through language that we show ourselves. The earlier interaction between the showmen and audience showed them to be automatons for the *Mincery*, repeating the same old responses, waiting to be "programmit," a word used interchangeably in the novel to mean thinking, planning, deciding, anything that requires a thought process, but suggests an involuntary, robotic process input by someone else: "vague notions of automatic – mechanical – processes that may lie hidden behind the familiar image of a living person" (Freud 2003: 135). Eusa, and all associated ritual and creed, is shown to be a *Mincery* meme: "an element of a culture or system of behaviour passed from one individual to another by imitation or other non-genetic means […] from Greek mímēma 'that which is imitated,' on the pattern of gene" (*OED*). Through Eusa, the people of Inland gather together awaiting a *reveal* from the *Connexion Man* to define their existence; but when so enframed by the *Mincery*, they can only live by the *Mincery*'s limited and disconnected worldview. Much like living in the Wellsian middle-ground, where the gods of civilisation rule discourse, the Inlanders' language is given to them from the outside, an invasive humanoid language, as though generated by Artificial Intelligence, with all the appearance of being alive, of being familiar, but not actually, replicating inorganically, and dominating discourse.

Conversely, by giving no recognisable form or ritual, no standard, to which the Eusa crowd would usually cling, Riddley elicits new responses, the Inlanders looking not to others for a joint recitation but individually within themselves,[5] each owning their solitary responses which Heidegger names *Einsam*:

> it is language alone that properly speaks; and it speaks in solitude. Yet only one who is *not* alone can be solitary; not alone, that is to say, not in separation and isolation, not devoid of all kinship. On the contrary, precisely in the solitary […] there unfolds essentially the lack of what is in common […] as the most binding relation to what is in common. (1993: 423)

Through his Punch shows, Riddley provides the Inlanders a way back to themselves through speech, for example when Pooty asks the crowd to guard her baby, "plenny of voyces" speak up (217). Each singular voice "bestirs itself and surges upward. […] a disturbing remnant […] a *penetrating gaze*" (1993: 421-2). Riddley too, having first listened to many other voices on his journey, experienced the same gestation and delivery of his own voice while alone within the "emtyness" of the "woom in Cambry" (2012: 159-60). Then, just as "the female's powerful gaze gives life to the object" (Todd 1986: 526), Riddley, in turn, reanimates his listeners through his own returned voice, bringing them each back to life. Similarly, Hoban's grapholect use does not simply 'mince' up language to produce dead words that no longer hold meaning; instead, word splitting, such as "inner acting, inner fearents" (Mullen 2000: 398) and double meanings such as those explored in this article, show the grapholect to be life-giving, opening up old words to light and air, "rifts" on the page that allow something new to grow out from them.[6] Where the "unspoken […] is the unsaid, what is not yet shown" (1993: 409), what is spoken brings language "this unknown but familiar thing" to sight (413-414), and so the complex grapholect of *Riddley Walker* demands that the reader speak the words aloud to properly hear their sound, to better understand their meanings: "*Sagan* means to show, to let something appear, let it be seen and heard" (409). Through this there is an unveiling again, of the familiarity of the language in our mouths from that which was previously unfamiliar on the page.

**Conclusion: Grapholect as Apocalyptic Unveiling**

In having to read aloud, the insinuation of a return to baby-speak remains,[7] and through it, a rejection of the ordered, adult, educated world, returning us to our first linguistic steps, and an "oral tradition, with its admittedly stereotypical associations with primitive, non-literature culture" (Boyne 2009: 6). Through his childish grapholect, Hoban demonstrates an uncanny "compulsion to repeat, which proceeds from instinctual impulses […] still clearly manifest in the impulses of small children" (2003: 145).

Freud talks only briefly about the "unintentional return" in his essay, and the main feeling he associates with uncanny returns is a feeling of hopelessness. There is certainly a sense of this within Hoban's writing: the futility of so-called progress that seems to always lead back to the path of humanity's self-destruction, as though we are "groping around in the dark of an unfamiliar room, searching for the door or the light-switch and colliding with the same piece of furniture" (2003: 144). Yet there is something to be said for seeking out familiarity in these returns, retracing our steps back to where things first went wrong, whether like Freud in an unfamiliar town (*Ibid*), or else, as Wells attempts in his writings, through the reflection and analysis of society. For example, in "A Story of the Days to Come," Wells seems to return (in vain) to the point in time where the ancestors of the Morlocks from his previously published novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), were first forced "Underneath" (loc. 2326), while those above in the upper classes, precursors to the Eloi, display the onset of frailty and literary laziness. Through these works he explores language differentiation and education in his own time as a point of divergence leading to exponential estrangement for people and society.

Instead, like Hoban, by accepting ourselves as revenants, we return as adults to where and when things last felt *right*, by recalling when things seemed less complicated, or when we last felt ourselves before we entered society, such as when we were at home as children. But this too suggests an inclination toward regression and an inability to evolve; no longer alive, but not yet dead, and so the languages of our not-yet-developed days as children play to the biases of dystopian fiction: that our development, like civilization or humanity, has stalled, or has become flawed, or regressed intellectually and morally, or that we have destroyed ourselves, and our once idealised homes. By conceding grapholects as the return of dead, zombie-like words rising out of the wasteland of world-ending destruction, we acquiesce to our own linguistic abjection. We accept that our homes, and who we are, are essentially flawed: laughable at best, destructive at worst, and that by knowing ourselves, we bring about our own apocalypse. But apocalypse does not mean destruction. Like Freud's *unheimlich*, the word means an uncovering, "from [...] Greek 'to uncover, disclose'" (*OED*: 72). It is a revealing of something once hidden but known all along, and though it can also mean the end of things, it does not have to mean everything. Revealing our private, individual selves could mean the end of the systems, rules and indeed languages that marginalised and dominated in the first place. By seeking value once more in that which has been discarded as linguistic waste, will bring about a multiplicity of voices, more reflective

of the unique and varied discourse that exits in the world, met with the effort and empathy required to understand; the need to listen, and to speak as ourselves.

---

**Notes**

[1] Corresponding with sociolinguistic studies such as Labov (1966b, 1968, 1990), Cheshire (1982), Coates, Eckert, Eisikovitis, O'Barr and Atkins (in Coates, 1998).

[2] Further information about the mechanising, commercialising, and normalising of standard language through nineteenth century can be found in Abberley (2015), and the way in which mothers were utilised as the conduit through which standard language and pronunciation was learnt, so naturalising a 'national language' from inside the home, can be read in Kittler (1990), and Mugglestone (1995);

[3] "The state authorities think they cannot sustain moral order among the living if they abandon the notion that life on earth will be 'corrected' by a better life hereafter" (Freud 2003: 148).

[4] Definitions of 'mince' and 'mincing' in the Oxford English Dictionary corroborate Cowart's assertion;

[5] *eux-même*, themselves; *même*, same; *moi-même*, self. (*The Oxford French Minidictionary*, Second Edition, 1993).

[6] "Riss [rift] […] *aufreissen* or *umreissen* [literally, to tear up, to rend or rive, to turn over]. They open up the field, that it may harbor seed and growth" (Heidegger 1993: 407).

[7] My final reading of the *memberment* pun is the French "mémé," a hypocoristic word for mother or grandmother, in relation to the child's voice, and so too our mother tongue.

**Bibliography**

Abberley, Will, 2014. "Language Decay and Creation in Postapocalyptic Fiction," in *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture, Post-Millennial Perspectives on the End of the World*, Monica Germanà and Aris Mousoutzanis (eds.), pp. 193-205, New York: Routledge.

—, 2015. *English Fiction and the Evolution of Language 1850-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyne, Martin, 2009. "Sentenced to Destruction: A Stylistic Analysis of the Syntax of Two Post-Apocalyptic Novels," in *Working With English: Medieval and Modern Language, Literature and Drama*, Vol. 5, No. 1, *Crossing the Divides*, ed. Jonathan Gibson, Matt Green, Nicole King and Brett Lucas, pp. 1-20. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/working-with-english/volume-5/boyne-sentenced-to-destruction-a-stylistic-analysis-of-the-syntax-of-two-post-apocalyptic-novels.pdf> Accessed 22/08/2022.

Cheshire, Jenny, 1982. *Variation in an English Dialect: A Sociolinguistic Study*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Coates, Jennifer (ed.), 1998. *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cowart, David, 1989. *History and the Contemporary Novel*, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dowling, David, 1988. "Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*: Doing the Connections," *Critique*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 179-87. Heldref Publications. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1310172203?accountid=14557> Accessed 22/08/2022.

Fairclough, Norman, 1989. *Language and Power*, Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Filmer, Kath, 1992. *Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth-Century Fantasy Literature*, Bowling Green University Popular Press.

Freud, Sigmund, 1919 (2003). *The Uncanny*, David McLintock (trans.). London, Penguin.

—, (1914). *On Narcissism: An Introduction. In J. Strachey et al. (Trans.), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV*. London: Hogarth Press.

Hardy, Sylvia, 2003. "A Story of the Days to Come: H. G. Wells and the Language of Science Fiction," in *Language and Literature*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp.199-212 <https://doi.org/10.1177/09639470030123002>

Heidegger, Martin, 1959 (1993). "The Way to Language" in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, David Farrell Krell (ed.), San Francisco: Harper Collins, pp. 393-425.

—, 1942-43 (1999), "On the Hand and the Typewriter", in Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young & Michael Wutz (trans.), Stanford University Press Stanford, California.

Hoban, Russell, 1980 (2012), *Riddley Walker*, London: Bloomsbury.

Kittler, Friedrich A., 1990. *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Michael Metteer and Chris Cullen (trans.), California: Stanford University Press.

Kristeva, Julia, 1982. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Leon S. Roudiez (trans.), New York: Columbia University Press.

Labov, William, 1966 (2006), *The Social Stratification of English in New York City.* Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics. 2nd Edition. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org.ezproxy.kingston.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9780511618208>

—, 1968 (1991), "Hypercorrection by the lower middle class as a factor in linguistic change",

The Hague: Mouton, in Labov, William, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, pp. 122-142. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

—, 1990 (1991), "The Intersection of Sex and Social Class in the Course of Linguistic Change", in *Language Variation and Change.* Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 205-54, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954394500000338>

Maynor, Natalie and Richard F. Patteson, 1984. "Language as Protagonist in Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*," *Critique* Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 18-25. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1310175031?accountid=14557> Accessed 22/08/2022.

Morris, C. A., 2018. *The Land That Rises*: *Dialect as Unheimlich in British Writing*, PhD Thesis, Kingston University. <http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/42578>

Mullen, R. D., 2000. "Dialect, Grapholect, and Story: Russell Hoban's "Riddley Walker" as Science Fiction," in *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 391-417. Published by: SF-TH Inc. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240920> Accessed: 22/08/2022.

Porter, Jeffrey, 1990. "'Three Quarks for Muster Mark': Quantum Wordplay and Nuclear Discourse in Russell Hoban's 'Riddley Walker'" in *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 448-69, University of Wisconsin Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1208323> Accessed: 22/08/2022.

Taylor, Nancy Dew, 1989. "...You Bes Go Ballsy: *Riddley Walker*'s Prescription for the Future", in *Critique* Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 27. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1310170956?accountid=14557> Accessed 22/08/2022.

Todd, Jane Mariem 1986. "The Veiled Woman in Freud's 'Das Unheimliche'," *Signs*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 519-28, The University of Chicago Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174008> Accessed: 22/08/2022.

Wells, H. G., 1895 (2005). *The Time Machine*, London: Penguin.

—, 1899 (1989). "A Story of the Days to Come", *Tales of Space and Time*, London: Harper & Brothers, Kindle edition, Location 1707-12, Lavla Edizioni.