

The “Dunblane Massacre” as a “Photosensitive Plate”

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“Dunblane: Never Forget” – Mick North

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Abstract: *This article seeks to understand the mass murders that took place at Dunblane in 1996 and to consider if we might see aspects of this mass shooting as prophetic of other mass murders, such as those that took place at Columbine, Sandy Hook and on Utoya Island. It does this by using what we describe as a ‘criminological autopsy’ about the shootings and, in doing so, considers why this mass murder – still the worst in British history – has rarely been considered within Criminology.*

2016 marks the 20th anniversary of the mass murders that took place at Dunblane Primary School in Stirlingshire on 13th March 1996, when forty-three-year-old Thomas Hamilton, using four licensed handguns, shot dead 16, mostly five-year-old children and their teacher, Gwen Mayor, in the school’s gymnasium. He also shot and injured 17 others, before taking his own life. These shootings lasted for just three minutes but, within that short space of time, one sixth of the city of Dunblane’s five-year-olds were killed and more than half of that year’s deaths among under 25s in the Stirling area, (North, 2000: 297). This mass murder remains the worst in British history, with more people killed and wounded in Dunblane than at Hungerford in 1987 or, more recently, in Cumbria in 2010.

How are we to explain this dreadful mass murder and does the anniversary of the shootings offer us an opportunity to reflect on it in new ways now that we have become more used to theorising about this type of crime? Why had Hamilton chosen Dunblane – a perfectly ordinary setting for this most awful of crimes - rather than somewhere else where he had connections to, and why 13th March? In passing, we also consider why Criminology – and other academic disciplines - have been so silent about the shootings. Despite most people being aware of the “Dunblane massacre”, or the

“Dunblane tragedy”, we could uncover only one academic article written about Dunblane (Collier, 1997) and, even though “Dunblane” appearing within its title, just one academic monograph which discusses Dunblane, albeit only in its final chapter (Aylward, 2012). More recently Langman (2015:149) briefly discusses Dunblane in his analysis of 48 largely North American “school shooters” and concludes by describing Hamilton as an “aberrant adult shooter”. Where Dunblane does receive coverage within academic texts these usually relate to gun control (see, for example, Squires 2000) or how these mass murders were covered within the print and broadcast media (see, for example, Jemphrey and Berrington, 2000; Smith and Higgins, 2012). We suggest that these criminological silences have served to help foster a popular narrative about Dunblane which is centred on Hamilton’s “oddness” and of his not belonging within the local community. He is therefore viewed as a “lone gunman”, with few friends, and thus largely unknown. As such, this narrative goes, he enters the community of Dunblane like a dark pied piper, as if out of nowhere, to suddenly steal the children from the community through their murders. This narrative is difficult to sustain objectively and simply responsabilising Hamilton or, as Zimbardo (2005: 24) describes it “the rush to the dispositional”, fails to locate his crimes within a number of more generic background factors which would, at least, include masculinity; gun culture; and official approaches to the supervision of children.

There are two starting points for our consideration of the shootings and how we might re-consider them in light of more recent mass murders. The first is an observation by the French Historian Andre Mongland, which has come to much greater prominence as a result of having being quoted by Walter Benjamin in his Arcades Project. The second relates to the activities that took place at a summer camp on an island in Loch Lomond in July 1988, and which had been organised by Hamilton. Mongland stated:

The past has left images of itself in literary texts, images comparable to those which are imprinted by light on a photosensitive plate. The future alone possesses developers active enough to scan such surfaces perfectly, (quoted in Benjamin 1999: 482).

We use the ideas contained in this observation to read a text from the past – to scan its surfaces – and to play with the concept of *Time* inherent in Mongland’s observation, not just as ‘developers’ from our ‘present’ as the ‘future interpreting the past’, but also, if you will, and with more trepidation, the present looking forwards to the future. The central text whose surfaces we scan has

become known as 'The Cullen Inquiry' (Cullen, 1996), which was the public inquiry that was set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland to look into the shootings at Dunblane Primary School in Stirlingshire on 13 March 1996.

Here we should note that the approach adopted, and which has been inspired by Mongland in looking for the future in our past and especially in our present, is not without dangers. As Žižek observes, "what we are doing now will only become readable once the future is here" (Žižek, 2012: 128). So, what we might be able to observe through our scanning today can only ever be partial and incomplete, rather than fixed and definitive. In other words, the future does not need to be an intensification of what already exists but might, in some circumstances, be discontinuous and disjointed and therefore the future which might emerge could offer a sweeping break from what is happening today. Steven Pinker is even blunter when he observes that "social scientists should never predict the future; it's hard enough to predict the past," (Pinker, 2011: 278).

Methodology

We have described how a critical analysis of The Cullen Inquiry forms a starting point and also much of the basis for how we have gone about trying to answer the questions which we have posed. However, this is not our only methodological tool. In a conscious allusion to a more popular and academically established methodology called the 'psychological autopsy', which is often undertaken after someone has taken their own life, we have chosen to call our approach a 'criminological autopsy'. Psychological autopsies have been defined as "a procedure for the reconstruction of suicidal death through interviews with survivors", (Bekow, Runeson and Asgard, 1990:307), and are therefore a way that inferences can be drawn about the deceased's behaviours, thoughts and emotions. This would be done by not only talking to those who knew the deceased, but also analysing letters and other documents which they may have left and generally trying to make sense of their psychosocial environment immediately prior to their death, (for a general introduction to psychological autopsies see Bartol and Bartol, 2014). We feel that our description 'criminological autopsy' better captures what we are attempting here, given that Hamilton not only took his own life, but also the lives of others, prior to him committing suicide. In short, what we are seeking to explain are the murders that he committed, rather than his suicide (for a general introduction to murder see Brookman, 2005). This approach has involved us making two research visits to Dunblane; driving the 8 miles from Hamilton's house in Kent Road in Stirling, so as to imagine what

he might have been thinking about on his twenty minute journey to the school's gymnasium; walking Dunblane's streets, eating in its restaurants and drinking in its pubs; speaking with any local residents who were prepared to talk to us; and visiting the memorial to the children and their teacher. None of Hamilton's immediate family are still alive and no one was prepared to speak to us who may have known him well. So too, given how very few people were prepared to talk more generally about the mass murders within Dunblane, we attempted to overcome this hurdle by also critically analysing Mick North's *Dunblane: Never Forget*. North's daughter Sophie was one of the children murdered by Hamilton and, as he relates:

Those of us who have grieved are often told we should have moved on, but to move on too far would be to forget. Indeed there is a constant tension between forgetting and remembering. If we forget we enter the dangerous realm of denial. To remember is to honour truth, (North, 2000: 298).

Like North we also want to remember as a way of honouring the truth.

Our criminological autopsy clearly has elements of ethnography (for a general introduction see Brewer, 2000), although we do not claim to have spent long periods of time within Dunblane, despite making two research visits there. There are also echoes in our approach with what Hamm (1998) describes as his "ethnography of terror", which he used to discuss the case of Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. McVeigh killed 168 men, women and children and Hamm describes how "their human remains – tiny arms and legs – were found a block away. From what universe beyond the one that most of us inhabit does this kind of evil arise?" (Hamm, 1998: 114). To study the case Hamm attempted to "virtually participate" in McVeigh's life and so visited the bomb site; made a field trip to Kingman, Arizona where McVeigh had lived; and even booked into Room 212 - the same room that McVeigh had used at the Imperial Hotel in Kingman. Hamm described his approach as:

My plan is to conduct a virtual ethnography of McVeigh's last stand. I walk across the asphalt parking lot with a bag over my shoulder, my guitar in one hand, and the room key in another. Looking up at Room 212, I am suddenly frozen in my tracks. Maybe I'm too absorbed in this research...There, surrounding the door frame of 212, is a black aura, Hamm (1998: 119).

There will be some criminologists who will be uncomfortable with Hamm's mixture of reportage and academic theorising about a terrorist incident where hundreds of people lost their lives. So too, we push our materials in ways which some will find unsettling in that we are consciously seeking to

understand what might have motivated Hamilton to commit these mass murders. In doing so we accept that motivation is often the “least understood and most neglected” aspect of Criminology (Hall, Winlow and Ancrum, 2008: 4), although what we attempt here is offered as a contribution to the new ‘psychosocial criminology’ of Gadd and Jefferson who want to “move beyond the rhetoric of folk devils and moral panics...to address the question of who these folk devils really are, what they have done and why and to try to make sense of their motive,” (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007: 186). In all of this, as Presdee (2000) reminds us, we need to consider the role of emotion in thinking about violence. We have been helped in this thinking – this imaginative criminological leap – about Hamilton’s motivation and emotional state through reading many of the letters which he left and which were subsequently published as part of The Cullen Inquiry. Indeed, we pay particular attention to the last letter which he wrote on 7 March 1996, which was addressed to the Queen and which we reproduce as an Appendix.

Throughout the article we describe what happened at Dunblane as “mass murder(s)”, or as “mass shooting(s)” and we describe Hamilton himself as a “mass murderer”. As such, we have employed criminological research about this phenomenon which views mass murder as involving four or more victims within a single episode, (Fox and Levin, 2005: 17). This phenomenon is therefore different to “spree” or “serial murder”, as both of these types of murder would require a “cooling off” period – of varying lengths – between attacks (for a general introduction see Wilson, 2009). There was no such cooling off period at Dunblane. However, where it has been helpful, we have also consulted academic and more popular literature related to other mass or spree murders which took place at Sandy Hook, Utoya Island and Columbine, (Borchgrevink, 2013; Cullen, 2009; O’Hagan, 2015; Schinkel, 2010; Seierstad, 2015).

Inchmoan

We start by looking backwards to 3rd July 1988¹. On this date, and for the next three weeks, Hamilton organised a summer camp on the island of Inchmoan in Loch Lomond for boys of about 9 years of age. Depending on the arrangements made with their parents, the boys would stay for one, or perhaps two weeks, sleeping under canvas, eating over a camp fire and sometimes being taken for a sail on Hamilton’s boat, which was moored on the loch. Hamilton stated that this was his 55th summer camp, although we have no way of verifying this claim. However, and to his great

¹¹ All details within this and subsequent sections are taken from The Cullen Inquiry 1996

annoyance, after having been asked to leave the Scouts in the mid-1970s – an organisation which remained a focus of his anger for the rest of his life - Hamilton had been running summer camps and a boys club at Dunblane High School since 1981 and he continued to run a club there until the time of his death fifteen years later. As well as this, he also ran at least ten other boys clubs at various points in time throughout central Scotland – all of which took place within local schools. Boys would pay a small amount of money to attend, but these clubs might be better seen as “loss leaders” which existed to drum up attendance at Hamilton’s summer camps, where presumably he could make more money and where Hamilton had greater opportunities to be alone with the boys. At the clubs boys would play football and sometimes they were even allowed to shoot guns, although the main activity seems to have been gymnastics, where the boys would be asked to strip to the waist and wear ill-fitting swimming trunks which were supplied by Hamilton. He took photographs and sometimes videos of the boys exercising in these trunks so as, he claimed, to ensure that they were using the right muscles.

During the camp on the Inchmoan Island, one boy quickly became unhappy and so he was taken home. As a result, complaints about the camp came to the attention of the parents of other boys, and also to Strathclyde Police, in whose jurisdiction Inchmoan was located at that time. PCs George Gunn and Donna Duncan duly visited the camp on 20th July. PC Gunn would later state that he found the camp site messy, with the sleeping bags of the boys damp to the touch and he noted that the only food available was tinned or powdered. The 13 boys who were in attendance seemed to PC Gunn to be cold and miserable but, crucially, no one accepted his offer to take them home. In conversation Hamilton also admitted to striking one or two of the boys as, he stated, they had been “cheeky”. However, no parent made a complaint against Hamilton, although he in turn would make a complaint against PC Gunn, whom Hamilton believed – wrongly as it happens – was a Scout leader and whom he suspected was therefore prejudiced against him. This complaint was later investigated, although this did not satisfy Hamilton who complained about the investigation into his complaint, which is why we know so much detail about what happened on the camp and which would later be referred to within the Cullen Inquiry. Hamilton plagued the officer so much that PC Gunn had to threaten to have him arrested and considered suing him for defamation of character, (Cullen, 1996: para 4.30).

There is also a second and perhaps even more interesting source about what happened on Inchmoan. Doreen Hagger was a mother of one of the boys who attended the camp. After her son

complained to her, Doreen visited the camp herself and agreed to stay on to help Hamilton who had been single-handedly running all the activities. She was not impressed by what she saw and would later testify that Hamilton had had the boys rub suntan oil onto him, although she did not personally witness this taking place. However, she was so distressed by what she did see that on her return from the camp she went out of her way to draw attention to Hamilton's unsuitability to be in charge of boys. In particular, on 16th May 1989, in the company of her friend Janet Reilly, who had also assisted at the camp, she assaulted Hamilton by pouring suntan oil and other substances over him as he left Linlithgow Academy at the end of one of his regular boys club meetings at the school. Doreen wanted to be taken to court for assaulting Hamilton and, so as to garner as much publicity as possible, had arranged for a journalist and a press photographer to be present to witness the assault. To her great annoyance, Hamilton refused to press charges.

Silences

There is in this brief vignette of the activities at Inchmoan Island, and the events that followed from them, a number of themes which are central to understanding the shootings that Hamilton would carry out eight years later, and also within the pragmatic responses to this awful event. Most obviously, at the heart of what was happening on Inchmoan were Hamilton's attempts to be in charge of young boys so that he could groom and, perhaps, abuse them. However, at a time when paedophilia was largely hidden and when, for example, Jimmy Savile was still regarded as a much-loved celebrity and charity worker who could "fix it" for children (*Jim'll Fix It*, BBC1 1975-1994), paedophilia was viewed as something which did not really happen in places such as Dunblane, the BBC, or indeed, more generally. And in the same way that Savile was adept at 'hiding in plain sight' (Davies, 2014) and avoiding the label paedophile being applied to him, and his various activities being characterised as sexual abuse, so too Hamilton successfully prevented these same labels being applied to him, to his boys clubs and summer camps. He did this largely through his formal complaints to and about the Police, the Scouts, various schools, and in his constant letter writing to parents. In a pre-email age, for example, it was common for Hamilton to advertise his boys clubs and summer camps by either hand delivering letters within the community, or having schools put these letters in their official communications with parents. For some he may indeed have been seen as "odd", but not sufficiently so, until 1996, for his activities to be censured, his behaviour criminalised, or the community more generally to shun him, his clubs and summer camps.

The word which we should use here is 'silenced'. Silence has both positive and negative dimensions. This is not just about the silence that comes from refusing to name – to label – what Hamilton's true intentions were to the boys that he gained power over, but an official silence by the various organisations who failed to make public their private disquiet about Hamilton, his unsuitability to be in charge of children, and to legally own guns. This private disquiet would only later emerge at The Cullen Inquiry. This official silence can be seen within the Scouts, the various gun clubs to which Hamilton belonged, a number of schools and the regional authorities which were formally responsible for the running of these schools and within the Police who granted firearms licences. Only one person – Doreen Hagger – sought to bring to wider public attention Hamilton's unsuitability to work with children, but she too was silenced. For example, she was described by Cullen (1996: para 4.74) as "lacking both reliability and credibility" even though it was she who almost single-handedly did more than most to out Hamilton to a wider public. These various silences, whether characterised as positive and negative, would explode into the noise of gunfire just a few years later with tragic consequences.

Communication in the pre-internet Age

Hamilton reacted to these various, long-standing, and essentially private rumours that circulated about him by constantly writing letters. Indeed Aylward, who adopts a psycho-dynamic approach to understanding Hamilton, describes him as "a prolific letter writer," (Aylward, 2012: 153). In a pre-internet age, letters were Hamilton's e mails or twitter posts which served to get his side of the story out to as wide a circulation as possible. This was the most consistent form of "noise" that Hamilton would use to counteract the silences – a noise which was often interpreted by parents incorrectly, as Hamilton's letters were regularly posted by the schools themselves and therefore appeared to be 'official'. These letters, many of which are reproduced within The Cullen Inquiry, offer us a means of understanding Hamilton's emotional state of mind and his motivation to engage in mass murder. In particular, his final letter, written to the Queen a week before the shootings (see Appendix), and also copied to a local MP, a local councillor, and head teachers of various local schools, including Dunblane Primary, also allows us a way into understanding what is likely to have prompted him to kill just a week after the letter was dated and, presumably, sent. This letter is almost a perfect way of understanding the proximate causes which were most immediately likely to have had an impact on Hamilton's thinking, and also ultimate and deeper influences which would result in mass murder. We do not know of the existence of a reply to this letter.

As has been indicated, even from the limited information which has been supplied above about Hamilton's summer camp on Inchmoan Island, this final letter is limited and partial. It tells one side – clearly Hamilton's side – of the events of the last 20 years. For example, he was asked to leave the Scouts as a result of complaints about his organisation of two trips to Aviemore in the Highlands, rather than his being "somewhat disillusioned" with the organisation of the local Scout Branch; Police investigations were prompted by complaints by concerned parents, rather than "on a whim and without proper complaint, cause or justification"; and there is no evidence to support his allegation that it was the Police who were spreading "innuendos". We might also note in passing his grandiosity – not just in addressing his letter to the Queen, but also in his seemingly sincere belief that the Scouts had taken against him because his Boys Clubs were "rival(s)" and needed to be "oust[ed]". Even his claim that rumours had reached "epidemic proportions" carries with it a sense of immodesty and exaggeration which are all facets of psychopathy. Indeed, the only person in Dunblane who refused to be silent was Hamilton.

What is of even greater interest is the insight that this final letter offers to us of Hamilton's emotional state. He describes his "personal distress" and "loss of public standing", to the extent that he cannot even "walk the streets for fear of embarrassing ridicule". So too, he explains, the letter had been prompted by his desire that the Queen should intervene so that he could "regain my self-esteem in Society". These passages are important from a criminological perspective as they chime with what we know about how violence can be used by some men who feel that they have lost "face". Gilligan (1999), for example, reminds us that violence often occurs when some men feel that their self-worth has been challenged and that, as a consequence, they feel embarrassed, powerless and worthless. As a result some men will use violence to re-build their wounded self-esteem and that:

The purpose of violence is to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it as far as possible with its opposite, pride, thus preventing the individual feeling overwhelmed by the feeling of shame, Gilligan (1999: 111)

Hamilton's violence is therefore not 'instrumental' but rather 'expressive', which D'Cruze et al (2006: 125) describe as a "less rational expression of personal identity." As such we might see his letter writing and his ongoing paranoia as a grand form of cognitive distortion (Beck, 1999), whereby Hamilton came to view himself as the victim who would have to fight to regain his sense of identity.

Above all, this final letter reveals Hamilton's gradual moral disengagement from the community and, as such, the means by which he could exaggerate differences between himself and others in that community. This moral disengagement no doubt facilitated within him an "us and them" form of thinking or, more accurately, a "me and them" mentality.

Making Sense of Hamilton

In all of this we might usefully employ Katz's (1988) concept of "righteous slaughter", whereby it is suggested that violence is used by the killer to restore a lost notion of the "Good", (Katz, 1988: 12). However Katz, who arguably prompted much of Criminology's renewed interest in emotion and psychological motivation, contrasted the "righteous murderer" with the "cold blooded murderer". This latter type, he suggested, placed themselves beyond traditional moral restraints and in so doing would be able to transcend 'normal' social environments, (Katz, 1988: 282-301). Unlike the murderer who commits "righteous slaughter" on the spur of the moment to regain his sense of self, the cold blooded murderer was already a social pariah before their killing(s) and had been reviled for most of their life. As such, they had never truly found contentment within 'normal society' and had instead found different ways of engaging with their social world. The cold blooded murderer would also take perverse pride in the crimes that they committed. From this perspective, it is clear that in Hamilton there are aspects of both righteous slaughter and cold blooded murder at work.

As an alternative to these largely criminological insights, we should also acknowledge that Aylward has interpreted Hamilton and the mass murder which he perpetrated from a psycho-dynamic perspective, to the extent that what emerges for him is "a powerful picture of a man destined to act out the unresolved conflict of his family history at a critical time", (Aylward, 2012: 152). Aylward is concerned with Hamilton's "trans generational history" in that Hamilton believed that his mother was his sister and that his grandparents – in fact his great aunt and uncle – were his parents. He never knew his birth father and would only discover that his sister was in reality his mother at the age of 22 – the same year that Hamilton lost his Scouting warrant. Aylward pushes these odd family dynamics into an analysis which suggests that, as a consequence, Hamilton became a "ticking time bomb waiting to explode" within his "adopted family" of Dunblane, through a "repetition compulsion" and that the resulting murders were "the massacre of innocence that was originally his own," (Aylward, 2012: 152-167). Aylward concludes that the mass murder in Dunblane can

ultimately be explained as a result of Hamilton feeling “disowned, and effectively killed off, first by father and then a mother, followed by the wider family group in society,” (Aylward, 2012: 175).

This is a provocative analysis which, at the very least, has attractions in that it seeks to understand what might have motivated Hamilton to have killed. Sadly, despite Dunblane remaining our worst ever mass murder, Criminology has been rather less eager to offer an analysis. However, we do not need to accept what Aylward concludes given that, despite the undoubted oddness of Hamilton’s family structure, there are more than likely other individuals with just as complicated family dynamics – or worse - but who do not go on to commit mass murder. Nonetheless what Aylward achieves is to pose questions about the roots of lethal violence and, in doing so, remind us how mass murder is always likely to be a complicated mix of the personal and individual, with the social and structural. He also reminds us about another form of silence. In this case the private silences that exist within families and which are maintained in public.

The silences which we have described about making sense of Hamilton at the time – both within the community and from a number of different organisations – are echoed in the silence of Criminology to theorise about what happened at Dunblane and in the continuing silences that we encountered within the city itself. It was simply not the ‘done thing’ to ask about the ‘massacre’ in Dunblane itself. This latter community silence can be contrasted with the ‘noise’ that Seierstad encountered in her research about Utoya Island for her book *One of Us*. For example, she described how

One of Us has come about thanks to all those who told their stories...Parents and siblings have shared their family histories. Friends have spoken of their comradeship[.] Some of the conversations went on for days and nights, others were short phone calls. It is the multitude of conversations that have made this book possible, (Seierstad, 2015: 515).

In short and in contrast for us, there was no sharing of family histories, long conversations into the night, or even short phone calls about Dunblane. Indeed, this is why Mick North’s plea to “never forget” what happened at Dunblane is all the more remarkable. North, a local resident who lost his daughter, remains the only source that we encountered which revealed anything about how someone caught up in the shootings responded to what had happened. Perhaps it is simply this lack of sources that has prevented Criminologists from pursuing this mass murder more fully or, alternatively, perhaps as an academic discipline Criminology remains loathe to tackle high profile

and serious violent crime. Indeed, Soothill and Wilson (2005: 685) also comment upon the “puzzle” of the motivation of the serial killer Harold Shipman and “a further puzzle is that few seem willing to confront this puzzle”. They suggest that Shipman’s behaviour was perhaps so “grossly unusual” that nothing could be learned from his behaviour. Sadly, these grossly unusual behaviours have become all too common.

Finally, given that Hamilton may be defined both as a cold blooded murderer and having engaged in righteous slaughter it is perhaps wrong for us to have described his letter writing simply as a manifestation of his “paranoia”. Paranoia literally means to have an extreme or unreasonable belief that other people do not like, or unfairly criticize you, but there is also a sense that we should acknowledge that Hamilton had in fact correctly identified a cause for the decline in support for his boys clubs and summer camps. North, picks up this point in trying to make sense of why people in Dunblane wanted to “move on” and “forget” about what had happened in the town. As he put it:

After the events of 13 March there must have been a variety of feelings within Dunblane among those who had known Hamilton. Some local people were prepared to blame others for their harassment of Hamilton and for spreading rumours about him...although not a Dunblane resident Thomas Hamilton had participated in the community for many years and had finally taken revenge on it, presumably because he resented its unwillingness to accept him...are the connections between the killer and the town a reason why some in the community want the massacre hidden away in the past? (North, 2000: 257).

Seen from these various perspectives, the shootings on the 13th March 1996 not only allowed Hamilton to gain revenge on those whom he saw as damaging his reputation, which in turn frustrated his efforts to groom the boys he desired, but also allowed him to do so in a butch and brutal way. This phrase has been chosen with care, and echoes Hall (2012), given that Criminology has long noted the nexus between violence and masculinity (for an overview see Winlow, 2001 and more recently Ellis, 2016). This resort to violence by some men can often be explained by a desire to avoid “shame” – the sense of dread that comes with the knowledge that social bonds have been broken and which will inevitably therefore result in social isolation (Gilligan, 1999), or the as the consequence of being humiliated so that there is a loss over one’s identity, (Katz, 1988). So too, in his journals, Dylan Klebold – one of the two Columbine High School shooters – described how “the lonely man strikes with absolute rage,” (quoted in Schinkel, 2010: 160. For a recent account see Klebold, 2016) and this phrase captures Hamilton perfectly. He could regain his standing in the local community by destroying that community and therefore did not bother to wait for the Queen to

intervene because he intervened himself. In this respect his shootings are “hyper masculine” or, as Hall (2012) has described it, “criminal undertakings”, gendered all the more as they were set within a context – a primary school – which was at that time essentially feminised. As Elliot Rodger, who had spent most of his life desperately trying to be “cool”, and who began to have “fantasies of becoming powerful and stopping everyone from having sex”, suggested in the following question which he posted on the internet to justify his spree killings in California in 2014 - “who’s the alpha male now, bitches?” (quoted in O’Hagan, 2015). One can almost imagine Hamilton echoing these very sentiments.

Discussion – Mass Murder

In suggesting something of this mass murder in the way which we have presented, are there elements which we might regard as prophetic? Is Dunblane Mongland’s ‘photosensitive plate’ that can tell us something about mass murders more generally, of late and in the future? Indeed, we have already alluded to Dylan Klebold and Elliot Rodger and how their observations and sentiments would have in all likelihood found common cause with Hamilton.

To pursue this question further, we conducted a simple word search of the Cullen Inquiry and, for example, found that mobile phones are mentioned three times and the internet just once. So, we discover, that there was only one telephone line into the school in 1996; that mobile phone signals quickly became jammed; and that “a line in the library was used for the internet facility,” (Cullen, 1996: 3.22). The internet is thus literally cornered in one room; locked up and kept under control. Letters being written by Hamilton are mentioned some 16 times, although in an age before social media, there is no mention of email, twitter or Facebook. This might immediately suggest that we have nothing to learn from Dunblane, especially when a comparable word search of the far-right, Norwegian spree killer Anders Behring Breivik’s “manifesto” reveals that the internet is mentioned 64 times, with various pieces of advice about how to use social media to its maximum advantage being offered throughout the 1,518 pages of *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*. Indeed, Breivik’s first act on the day of his spree shootings was to post copies of his manifesto online. Although here too we might note that Breivik was another “lone gunman” who targeted children at a summer camp, although his shooting spree lasted for nearly 90 minutes, as opposed to three and the children that he targeted were older. So too, in contrast with other mass and spree murderers, he did not take his own life because, presumably unlike Hamilton, Klebold and Rodger he expected there to be future gains from his actions.

However, and despite these largely superficial and technological differences, it seems that there is much in Dunblane which is prophetic of the mass murders which were to come, to the extent that Hamilton might be seen as the “father” who begets Breivik, Rodger and their ilk. He is, for example, desperate to order the world in a way which gives him power – perhaps even omnipotence. In any event, he sees this power as rightly his, but he believes he has been frustrated in his attempts to gain authority over others who have unfairly accused, shunned or dismissed him. Often he interprets this as a result of a conspiracy to prevent him from having what is rightly his; to prevent him from living life less ordinary; to be a ‘somebody’ in a world where he is, or believes he is, viewed as a nobody. Hamilton is a Beta male, who is desperate to be an Alpha, with all the benefit that he believes would come from that designation.

In Hamilton we see the perverted narcissism of all mass murderers and also their desperate attempts to seduce you to their own way of thinking. Breivik and the more recent spree killers might use social media to do this but Hamilton’s letters – sometimes hand delivered and at night – were the forerunners of the web pages, instagrams and manifestos that are now routinely left behind by spree killers to justify their actions and which are and will continue to be poured over after the event in a search for explanations. Hamilton was a ‘troll’, who berated those who took against him, except in the case of Doreen Hagger and a type of ‘disgruntled employee’ too. He was angered by his lack of success and advancement in the Scouts and then more generally in the failures of his boys clubs and summer camps. He was also frustrated sexually, not because women did not like him but, rather, because he preferred boys. Hamilton wanted advancement and success – like all the more recent mass murderers – but what he experienced were set-backs and disappointment, mostly through his own inadequacies. But with a gun, or more accurately guns, in his hands he could play God so as to settle – once and for all – who was right and who was wrong; with a gun he could take revenge on a community that he had grown to hate. As he would have seen it, his was both a righteous slaughter and cold blooded murder which served to ameliorate his personal neuroses and re-order his world.

Conclusion

Is there not something of all of this in every incidence of mass murder, albeit acknowledging that each mass murder will have some extra ingredient added, or indeed missing? What’s new is the

speed and intensification that has come with the internet being freed from a solitary line into the library which characterised Hamilton's time, so that these personal disappointments much more quickly become the national tragedies that we see on our TV screens. The murders of Alison Parker and Adam Ward by Vester Lee Parker live on television in August 2015, and which Parker then immediately posted onto his Facebook and Twitter accounts is the awful reality of what is to come. Not only have we become more technologically connected to each other since 1996 and, as a result, more dependent on that technology, but we have also become increasingly enmeshed with our virtual representations of ourselves, so that "the distinction between our virtual and physical selves will continue to erode," (Goodman, 2015: 288). This is surely a process that will continue to intensify over the next 20 years living, as we all now do, "in" media rather than "with" media (Deuze, 2014) and which will without doubt create the context in which future mass murders and spree killings will occur.

Of course, people are rightly always shocked and surprised by mass murder. As a result there is an understandable tendency to view the murderer as different; as odd in some way; as extraordinary. However, this understandable overestimation of the dispositional rather ignores what we know all too well – that ordinary people can commit acts of dreadful evil. Perhaps we should therefore conclude that what Hamilton did was extraordinary but not the man himself. This 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 1963) of course only serves to increase the horror of what occurs, but it should also make us question the true causes of lethal violence such mass murder. This questioning should, we would urge, be one of the responsibilities of Criminology although, so far, it has been a responsibility that has been largely avoided.

The good news is that in Dunblane one of the solutions to reducing the incidence of mass murder also emerges. What would have stopped Hamilton was to have made public what many suspected privately and for the community and organisations that knew Hamilton all too well to have found a voice. At an individual level perhaps all that it would have taken for Hamilton to have been stopped would have been for Doreen Hagger to have succeeded in her campaign to name what was actually going on at the boys clubs and summer camps. As is too often the case, the silencing of women – both as victims and more generally as a gender – creates the circumstances in which men can abuse, hurt and kill. On the other hand, listening to their voices might just craft a very different world to the one in which we currently live. Finally, as Žižek (2012) reminds us, we should also remember that the French have two words for "future" – *future* and *avenir*. The former stands for future as a

continuum of the present, whilst the latter suggests a more radical break from the past. If we want such a break from what is happening today we would do well to encourage, rather than silence, the Doreen Haggars of this world. It is this type of noise that will keep us all safe.

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Appendix

7 March 1996

Your Majesty,

I understand you are Patron of the Scout Association and in that capacity I would like to make you aware of a longstanding complaint against the Scout Association.

Over 20 years ago, as a young man of about 20 years of age, after my time as a Venture Scout, I was asked to become a Scout Leader, which I did with enthusiasm and in a fair and competent manner. I was at that time, however, somewhat disillusioned with the general management which existed in this District at that time. After a period of a year, I was offered a better position by District Commissioner, J. Don. Within the Association in Mr Don's nearby district of Hillfoots which I accepted. However, my transfer was refused by Scottish Scout Headquarters without any explanation. D. C. Don approached my previous D.C., Mr R. Deuchars, and as a result of this, reported in confidence to me that Mr R. Deuchars was attempting to have me branded as a pervert. When Mr Don demanded justification of this, Mr Deuchars' only response was that I was "friendly" with the boys. Mr Don remarked that a Scout Leader was supposed to be friendly with the boys and as a conclusion Mr Don reported to me that he had nothing on me but he may cause me considerable damage if unchecked.

In what I consider to be a breach in natural justice, Mr R. Deuchars then submitted a confidential report on me in line with the Policy Organisation and rules of the Association. I know that no child has ever made any complaint of a sinister or sexual nature against me but D. C. Deuchars, together with the A.D.C. Mr Samuels and the G.S.L. Mr McKenzie visited and interviewed every child in my old Group including especially everyone who had been a member and left. Nothing of a sinister nature came to light. However in a bid to justify his actions, Mr McKenzie reported that Mr Deuchars had sought to create innuendos about with the statement Why is he so enthusiastic – think about it? Mr J. Don referred to jealousy as the likely cause.

My attempts to approach Scottish Scout Headquarters were ignored and I could get nowhere since I was blocked from all angles. I was unable to get any response as to whether or not I was blacklisted or informed about details of the confidential report by Mr Deuchars. As time passed, numerous and various reports were received that Mr Deuchars was passing information within the District Scout area that I was a pervert which was passed to the public in an underhand way.

Over the past 20 years of youth work, this has caused me untold damage including Council, Police and Social Work investigations where they had acted as a direct result of information received in absolute confidence from officials of the Scout Association. Any subsequent investigation was instigated on a whim and without proper complaint, cause or justification. For the purpose of the police complaints procedure, the investigative skills of the police are put into reverse. It seems to be a tactic of the police during any investigation, to spread innuendos to as many people as possible and in such a way as to cause maximum damage and then when their investigation comes to nothing, they do nothing about retracting their accusations. This has probably been the most damaging of all on the part of the Police and Council.

I have been involved with the organisation of Boys Sports Clubs for over 20 years and the rumours circulated by officials of the Scout Association have now reached epidemic proportions across Central Region. As well as my personal distress and loss of public standing, this situation has also resulted in loss of my business and ability to earn a living. Indeed, I cannot even walk the streets for fear of embarrassing ridicule.

All of this and more has been caused by the maladministration of the Scout Association and their denial of natural justice and duty of care. To some Scout Officials, it was simply a rouse [sic] to oust a rival (deleted) group.

I turn to you as a last resort and am appealing for some kind of intervention in the hope I may be able to regain my self-esteem in Society.

I am,

Your Obedient Servant.

Thomas Watt Hamilton