

Reunions: standing and turning relationships

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Abstract

This chapter supplements the 'Snubs' chapter in 'In the Beginnings of Social Inquiry' by pursuing a similar episode, documented by LeBaron and Jones (2002), where a snub does not happen and, instead, a chance encounter leads to a reunion between former acquaintances. Unsurprisingly, the question of each party's standing toward each other does not have a simple answer in the reunion. How they stand in relation toward one another brings with the remembering and reconsideration of their former relationship and their former characters. In the reunion, at a hairdressers salon, with third parties witnessing the reunion, it calls upon each party's senses of discretion over what of their or the other's intimate details they will reveal. Finally, the chapter underlines the ambiguity of the reunion as an event where each party is caught between proximity and distance, between acknowledging or avoiding the other.

“failure to have singled you out appropriately in passionate utterance characteristically puts the future of our relationship, as part of my sense of my identity, or of my existence, more radically at stake. One can say: The “you” singled out comes into play in relation to the declaration of the “I” who thereby takes upon itself a definition of itself, in, as it may prove, a casual or a fateful form. A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law. And perhaps we can say: A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire.” (Cavell, 2005: 194)

Reunions & re-visittings

You bump into someone you once knew, after many years apart. A chance encounter has brought together two people that once had a relationship. It may be that each is delighted to see the other, or that there is a certain dread from one, or from both, or that there are only polite and perfunctory inquiries. It may be that one finds the other to be just the same, or to have changed dramatically in appearance or manner. It may be that one has a debt toward the other, or carries an injury inflicted by the other. What happens during such encounters raises the shared problem of the reunion. A shared problem that proliferates in contemporary lives where relationships are begun, interrupted, pursued, avoided or ended but then returned to us by mobility, migration and social media. Reunions are occasions that open up the possibility of the rekindling, maintenance, transformation, beginnings and extinguishing of relationships. Its very basis and its central trouble is that whatever the relationship with the other person might become, they begin from an encounter where their relationship is a former relationship. It provides them with a more or less substantial history but, as yet, no future relationship. Each person’s standing toward the other is a former standing where to either rekindle or extinguish the relationship requires, first, a returning toward them.

My chapter in this collection takes the form of three re-visittings. Firstly, it is a re-visiting of the Orange Book’s chapter ‘Snubs’ which is itself a response to an earlier work by Roy Turner (1970). The ‘Snubs’ chapter is one of the texts where Self-Reflection makes clear not only the warrants for its departure from ethnomethodology but also how it analyses everyday encounters, through its engagement with Turner’s description of the same encounter. Secondly, my chapter revisits the description of a reunion in a conversation analysis study by LeBaron and Jones (2002) which I had first read with an interest in endings of encounters, though not, as I will touch upon later, the endings of relationships. In responding to LeBaron and Jones idea of the reunion my chapter tries to emulate the move made in the ‘Snubs’ chapter, which was to supplement the first description of an action made by Turner, by looking into the conditions of possibility for that sort of action.

Finally, this chapter was occasioned by the reunion of the community behind the Orange Book on the 40th anniversary of its publication. Members of the community were, during that event, themselves revisiting the book. To revisit a book or a person, while it might be related to the idea of a reunion, is quite a different matter. The reunion acquires its ambivalence and its sense of vulnerability from its parties reflecting upon their former standing with one another. It may be that they find themselves drawn to the enjoyment of the reunion that works out what the other person has become and the might be for the self. As it was, the community of authors and readers at the Orange book’s reunion found themselves comfortable with the development and working out of themselves found at the reunion (Blum & McHugh 1984, 148). It lead to future plans for future meetings and future conversations, this edited collection being one of them.

Snubs

To snub someone is one solution, then, to the problem of the reunion - rather than allow a reunion to take place one denies any standing with the other on encountering them. In his original work 'Words, Utterance and Activities', Turner examined the complaint made, during a self-help meeting of former mental hospital patients, by one member of the group (Bert) of being snubbed by another former mental patient. In Bert's story of the encounter, he placed the other patient as someone he had 'always buddied around with' (1970: 176), But when he met this old acquaintance some time later in a city street, Bert was snubbed by him. The old acquaintance was walking with another person unknown to Bert. In explaining why one former mental patient would snub the other, Turner reminded us of the expectation that persons on being reunited should 'bring one another up to date' and/or 'talk over old times' (1970: 183). In Bert's case he would reveal that they were once both patients in a mental facility to the third party or, if he did not, it would be something that his former acquaintance would be obliged to reveal later. Turner argues that, for those with a former identity that they are trying to hide from their new acquaintances, they have reasons for both trying to avoid other former mental patients and snubbing them if they do bump into them.

In 'Snubs', McHugh et al summarised Turner's version of the snub as a refusal of recognition accomplished through a set of conversational conditions. When one acquaintance greets another and the other does not return the greeting, the rule violation that obligates a greeting to be returned with a greeting is broken. McHugh et al. (1974: 114) provide Turner's components for doing a snub:

- (a) a greeting to an acquaintance
- (b) which is not returned
- (c) when the absence of such a return shows itself as a denial of recognition, and
- (d) where the denial of recognition can be seen as a snub

McHugh et al point toward the limitations of Turner's analysis of a snub: 'Turner's analysis is just a description of some features of a particular snub rather than an analysis of how a snub is possible' (1974: 113). McHugh et al then pursue the further conditions that make each of these four parts possible. For the first component, they remind us that it turns upon the knowledge that the other is a person that we have rights to greet (see also Sacks, 1992). Not only does it rely upon rights to greet the other but also that we know that a greeting should be produced to make it a recognisable greeting. For the second component - absence of a return greeting - the person making the greeting is required to assume that the other has mutual knowledge of the obligation to produce a greeting when greeted. The complexities of the snub deepen when McHugh et al. go on to add that, it is not just the greeting that is absent but, to satisfy the third requirement of a 'denial of recognition', the other party has to have intended such an absent response, rather than merely failed to notice the greeting. Finally, for the fourth feature, to see the denial of recognition as a snub, the person snubbed has to know more about the situation than merely that each of the previous three conditions was broken, to be confident that the other is snubbing them. Moreover, as they continue, refusal to recognise an acquaintance does not go far enough, a snub 'must in some sense be seen as insulting' (1974: 117).

McHugh et al.'s (1974) analysis deepens our understanding of snubbing by reminding us that it is not that the snubber denies that they recognise the other, it is that they do recognise the other. A snub assumes that the snubber shares the mutual recognition of the other and then, by their refusal,

formulates the snubbed as someone they do not care for. In Turner's description of the self-help session, for the former mental patients listening to Bert's story of the snub there is a yet more complex judgement of the earlier event. The absence of a greeting and the denial of recognition suffered by the storyteller there, began a reflection by other groups members of the difficulties of dealing with their shared identity of former mental patients. In other words, the problem of chance encounters for former mental patients left quite whether the snub should be seen as insulting, to be the inquiry that the self-help group in Turner's study were pursuing. While they show sympathy toward Bert's suffering they also reconsider the other former mental patient might have been avoiding remembering or admitting that he had once been a mental patient. Either of which interpretations would lessen the absence of response being done with the desire to insult Bert.

Turner only mentions that the snub was a way of avoiding a reunion in passing and consequently there is little material on reunions in his writings to work with. However, thirty years later, Curtis LeBaron and Stanley Jones provided a detailed description of the features of a reunion and how those features are put to use by its participants. Paralleling the role of the snub in Turner's work, LeBaron and Jones's primary focus in their article is not on how a reunion is possible nor is it focused primarily on reunions. It is, instead, on how encounters are closed, relatedly, how they are concluded in relation to: (a) the third parties to that encounter; (b) to 'the social and material surrounds as a resource' (2002; 560) and (c) to how the encounter was begun.

While it might seem that just what a reunion is, will disappear entirely into a more general concern with closings as part of an underlying interaction order, LeBaron and Jones do hold on to the reunion as a 'programmatically whole' which closings are required to relate to. In other words, it is a member's resource for organising the initiation, progress and ending of the encounter. Consequently they do not grapple further with the problem of the reunion itself, they collect it as one of the many forms of ritual in everyday life. What they risk in treating reunions as 'ritualistic' is, by following Erving Goffman, taking an 'ironic cast' (Watson, 1992) on reunions as ritualistic in the sense that they follow known-in-common and well-established patterns. Equally, by staying with Goffman, they place the parties to the reunion in a distant, if awed, relationship to one another which then seems to rule out pursuing and accomplishing intimacy with one another (Raffel, 2002; 2013a).

While LeBaron and Jones' concern with the participant's perspectives and care around the event largely reprieves them from Goffman's ironising of the reunion as an insincere performance (Raffel, 2013). A trace of irony nevertheless remains in LeBaron and Jones's concern with revealing 'potential resources for interaction' (p560) where the reunion becomes just another resource to get the work of ending encounters in general done. The reunion is left interchangeable with closing a business meeting, ending a phonecall or getting off the bus. However this is not at odds with LeBaron and Jones desire to 'augment research on departure behaviour' (p599) though it is in tension with their claim that 'generalisability is not their goal'. How we depart from a reunion is not how we depart from just any encounter, nor even ritualistic encounters, and quite how it is closed can help reveal the auspices of reunions. We can analyse a reunion as an event for inquiring into 'the grounds or auspices of phenomena' (McHugh et al 1974: 1-2) where those phenomena here are, as they were with snubs, remembering what each party's former relationship was to the other and from that returning to that previous standing, what our standing to one another might be and might become. To begin to understand the reunion is to begin to understand events where relationships are remembered rediscovered, reinitiated, destroyed or, in other ways transformed, even if only minimally.

Discretion

One of the surprising qualities of snubs that is disclosed in the Orange Book is that snubs have a protective quality. While we might see the snubbed as damaged by the snubber's action, they note that the snubbed is also protected by the snub. The snubbed is left unrelated. They are left on their own island rather than having to establish their shared place - their common ground. The temptation to snub rather than reunite is something that we can begin to understand through the hesitancy we feel on recognising certain old acquaintances. A hesitancy around 'offering oneself up to the other' (McHugh et al 1974: 131) which leaves oneself vulnerable to being snubbed, mistaken for someone else, barely remembered, remembered all too well, tolerated, subsequently pursued, exposed and so on. In the face of the hazardous landscape of the encounter with past friends and acquaintances, the idea of the snub and the reunion 'resonates with ideas of restraint, discretion and limit' (1974: 136).

In his essay on secrecy and social relationships Simmel picks out acquaintanceship as the form of relationship 'which is the peculiar seat of "discretion"' (1906:452). Acquaintances lack the insights of intimates into each other's personality, and the rights to have those insights, even as they come to know facts about the other person which they 'did not positively reveal' (ibid). Restraint is required by acquaintances not to come too near to the other. For an acquaintance to intrude further into what the other has not revealed (e.g. their fears, their loves, their mistakes etc.) is to risk violating the personality of the other. Simmel notes that what is private to the person is not defined by its topic (e.g. fear of spiders, their first love, shooting their neighbour's donkey by mistake) but that knowledge of those matters has been restricted to, for instance, friends rather than acquaintances. Former inmates of mental institutions and pupils and teachers both find themselves with forms of friendship but more particularly acquaintanceship where the facts they know about one another can be substantially more than were positively revealed.

The Orange Book develops the idea that to snub the other was to deny their freedom by denying them a relationship that is formed with them-self and with the other. An obscure point, they add, but one that begins to take shape here when we consider discretion. Turner, in seeking to find the reason for the snub, points out that it is a feature of reunions that the shared history is revealed. Yet the snubbed's freedom would have been to exercise discretion (or not) about the secret that he knew about his acquaintance. As Simmel puts it "discretion is nothing other than the sense of justice with respect to the sphere of the intimate contents of life." (Simmel 1906: 454). Judging the boundaries of what the other person regards as a violation of their privacy, as Simmel then goes on to warn, 'leads ... into the finest mesh of social forms' p454. To snub the other was also to not trust the other to exercise their discretion in front of a third party.

Let us begin to consider the 'finest mesh' that is discretion in LeBaron and Jones (2002) analysis of the unfolding of a reunion between two persons acquainted many years previously. In this reunion (as it was with Turner's snub) there are third parties present and there is a former institutional relationship. In LeBaron and Jones's article, it is a school teacher (Wilcox) and her former pupil (Katie) that have a chance meeting in a hairdressers' salon, many years after their time together at school. Katie is sitting having her haircut when an older woman (Wilcox) approaches her. Initially they struggle to remember one another's names. As their encounter continues, Katie tells her former teacher about events that took her away from their town and of the death of her brother that brought her back again. In the excerpts provided in the article, Wilcox reveals little about herself by comparison. As LeBaron and Jones show, this in part because Wilcox, the former teacher, continually asks Katie questions while also engaging with the other customers and staff. It is Katie's public character that thereby remains the object of attention for Wilcox and for the others.

Wilcox indicates that Katie had a reputation at school that others in the hairdresser might like to learn about. And Katie, in turn, orients to the jointly remembered reputation as requiring further qualification by her.

96 Wilcox: Katie was something else
97 ((group laughter))
(lines omitted around hairdressing)
102 Katie Okay, but it wasn't like see...

As the reunion continues, LeBaron and Jones provide an excerpt of the comments that are made by the other hairdressers and customers about the former pupil:

115 Dina: She looks like she's in
116 elementary school again doesn't she
...
122 Ms Y: ..hh she sounds like a five year old . . .

Even with only the minor revelation that Katie is Wilcox's former pupil, this knowledge reshapes how the hairdressers see and hear Katie. They say that Katie both 'looks like' and 'sounds like' a young child. It is not just that by the very mention of her once having been someone's pupil that they find these similarities, it is in the details of how Wilcox and Katie are addressing one another (as we shall see later). They find comparisons through metaphors (Raffel, 2013b) with a five year old that in illuminating Katie's conduct also reveal aspects of her character that she had not imparted.

The accidental reunion has brought with it, then, a change in how Kate appears at the hairdressers, she is seen in similarities to a small child in, and as part of, how she relates to her former teacher. Until this reunion Katie was known through the personal history that she volunteered during her small talk with her hairdresser, through the hairdressing-relevant aspects of her external appearance: her style of dress, her shoes, her age and her ambitions for her hair (Laurier, 2012; McCarthy, 2000; Toerien & Kitzinger, 2007). With this in mind it becomes clearer why the presence of other acquaintances, that do not share the history that is the basis for that reunion, touch upon discretion and indiscretion, upon the senses of privacy and upon the public character each has established. It seems, from the material presented by LeBaron and Jones, that in remembering their relationship, Wilcox does not enter into a one-to-one conversation with Katie. By the use of indiscreet discretions Wilcox thereby aligns herself more closely with the hairdressers than with Katie (Bergmann, 1993) providing an early hint of Wilcox's balance between acknowledgement and avoidance of intimacy with Katie.

Between knowing and acknowledging former acquaintances

Drawing on earlier work by Troll (1988) & Selzer (1988), Jones and LeBaron (2002) describe a formal reunion as an event of collective remembering that brings together individual histories, events and groups. LeBaron and Jones argue that the chance encounter takes on 'ritualistic' qualities of a formal reunion because, even when unplanned, it follows the same prescribed order. What then produces the chance encounter as a reunion (rather than a snub) is a collection of prescribed elements which LeBaron and Jones list from the earlier studies of formal reunions:

1. Greeting and acknowledging the past relationship
2. Returning to the history of the relationship
3. Ending the reunion through turning to the present and planning for the relationship's future

In identifying the features of the reunion that its participants need to achieve to constitute their encounter as a reunion, they then miss much of the delight, anxiety, dread, and ambivalence that prefigures planned reunions and accompanies accidental ones. Reunions sit in a realm of encounters beset by perlocutionary concerns: lived through as events where we are embarrassing and embarrassed, boring and bored, charming and charmed, inspiring and inspired, confusing and confused. The trouble and delight of reunions is that, as Cavell (2005) argues for the passionate encounter, is while, for instance, one former friend might be trying to embarrass the other, the other is instead, bored, or perhaps charmed. Following Cavell further, reunions are encounters where one and the other shows (and perhaps hides) their standing toward the other and tries singles just this other out (e.g. as Katie) or place them in a collection (e.g. another former pupil). In the accidental reunion the other in public is not anyone, they are just this one and this one that has a greater claim to find a relationship with the other.

Katie and Wilcox's reunion is not driven by deep desires, as Cavell's passionate encounters are, though, by its end, desire is at work. If we return to Wilcox and Katie's first noticing of one another, it is marked by uncertainty over who the other is ahead of any more sustained interest in the other. Katie has pointed toward Wilcox on the other side of the hairdressers and Wilcox has then walked toward Katie's chair in response. They begin without being able to put a name to one another's face which then begins to produce a context of their limited recollection of one another.

28 Katie: Your name Ms [Bridges?
 29 Wilcox: [No no Wilcox
 30 (0.3)
 31 Katie: Wilcox?
 32 Wilcox: Um hm

40 Wilcox: What's your name?
 41 (0.2)
 42 Katie: It used to be Katie Crumby
 43 (0.4)
 44 Wilcox: Katie?
 45 Katie: Yes ma'am

At line 28 Katie offers a tentative remembering of the name of the other woman: 'Ms Bridges?' one which, in fact, fails to correctly recall the other's name. Rather than the details rushing back to Katie (e.g. expressed in 'Ms Wilcox, right?') she is only feeling her way back toward who this other person was. In selecting a surname rather than a first name, Katie marks a past relationship which was not on first name terms, for Katie at least. Calling someone only by their surname indexing a likely institutional and/or hierarchical relationship.

Where the formality of surnames is a marker of distance, it becomes more clearly a marker of something else when Katie offers her name as 'Katie Crumby', thereby providing both first name and surname for Wilcox and Wilcox selects 'Katie'. Not only does their dialogue re-instate their former relational-pairing of teacher-pupil through surname for one and first name for the other. Katie's further affirms this through a respectful 'yes ma'am'. While it is tempting to see this as the only the re-instatement of Wilcox's authority and seniority, the surname+first-name is bound up

with their joint task here of collective remembering. If we move back to line 42, Katie says 'it used to be'. The name she is offering is not one that should be taken to be her present name and that question of why it is no longer Katie Crumby is left hanging for later. It is the extended form of name that she had when she was a pupil which then offers her former teacher the best resource for recalling the former pupil now in front of her at the hairdressers.

The unexpected reunion is a Proustian moment where eating a madeleine has been replaced by talking to Madeleine. An unbidden remembering, this time with one of the parties to, and from, that past both parties seeking to recall that past to the present. Yet it is not at all Proustian, because each person does not have the liberty of several weeks spent at their writing desk reconstructing and inscribing their memories. With an audience and a hairdresser waiting to continue cutting Katie's hair, the re-united parties have to move quickly toward remembering the period of their lives where they once knew one another and remembering the person in that period. Moreover, their current possibilities for a relationship turn less upon knowing with certainty what that past relationship was, and more upon acknowledging that there was a past relationship. There is a clear difference here then between the snub and the reunion. The person that snubs the other, knows them but refuses to acknowledge them, the person that returns the greeting, knows the other and acknowledges them. Reunions turn not upon questions of claiming to know one another (where the snub was a claim not to know the other), but as Cavell (1976) argued, a question of what one does or reveals on the basis of that knowledge.

For a reunion to be possible there has to be a separation, an apartness and a passing of time, that breaks the continuity that characterises any ongoing relationship. The break changes what the relationship is, what it was and reopens questions of acknowledgement. Terminations of ongoing relationships are at their most apparent in divorces, dissolutions, splits and annulments, yet they happen also through shifting circumstances. For Kate and Wilcox, part of being a former teacher and former pupil is that the question over what ended their relationship need not be raised. Part of how acquaintances inside and outside institutions relate to another is that they can depart with or without account nor special ceremony. Pupils naturally exit the institution of the school each year and commonly change their teachers year by year. They need not examine why their relationship ended and that it did, does not mark them as having special concern for one another. However the very fact of the chance reunion means that the relationship with the other can mean more in the present than its ending did in the past¹.

While the school allows for the annual beginning and ending of pupil teacher relationships, it also creates a problem of the few and the many. Each teacher has many more former students than she could name or remember at all. For the former student they have only a few former teachers though they will, of course, also recall only the memorable ones. Recalling the other is not only asymmetrical because of the few and the many, it is also that there is an asymmetry of recognisability. The former teacher remains recognisable to the former pupil but in growing from a child to a woman, the former pupil may not be immediately recognisable from her appearances (those very changes becoming a topic later in their encounter). The problem of the many and their changing appearances for Wilcox may also be one that leads to her routinely avoid new relationships with her former pupils. An asymmetry that leaves her in a lifeworld of avoidance that we find in its extreme in the paradigmatic case of stars that 'just want to be alone'. If we detect a certain avoidance of relationships with former pupils in the teacher it grows out of that institutional life.

¹ From comments by Raffel on an earlier draft of this chapter.

Standing and trying to turn the former relationship

As we saw earlier, across the hairdressers's floor, Katie had successfully remembered her former teacher by her appearance, if not by her name. Once they are up close, holding one another's arms in an expression of the reunion's intensity, their appearances are re-examined. Each face is itself a resource in remembering. The re-examination takes in a face to compare that face that is seen now to the face from the past that it helps in recalling. An extended taking-in of the other's appearances as indexing their age now, their age then and those appearances in a course of mutual ageing. There is more than the face of the other to take in: as Katie and Wilcox step back from their hug, they continue to look at one another, seeing the face in a wider context of shoulders, arms, clothing and, of course, hair. Having regarded each other, they are then in a position to say, with the authority of that intense mutual regard:

57 Katie: You look goo:d.
58 Wilcox: You look good too
59 ((Group laughter (1.2)))

LeBaron & Jones point out that "Katie's assessment 'You look good' (Line 57) is more than a compliment, it acknowledges a prior relationship to the extent that it relies upon a recollection of how Wilcox looked before" (2002: 548). While it relies upon that recollection it also marks that, at least in terms of appearance, neither bears the marks of misfortune through illness or poverty, neither has to immediately account for the loss of an eye nor for sleeping on the street. Yet in each person saying that the other 'looks' good, looking good rather saying they 'are good', leaves open that they might be suffering now or have done so in the intervening years. LeBaron & Jones begin to explore these mutual assessments: 'the women sound like social equals' though we should note with the caution of 'sound like', because they more clearly reveal later that they have not escaped the force of their previous relationship. Katie, as LeBaron and Jones argue, re-enacts their former institutional relationship by regularly addressing Wilcox as "ma'am" as she does above at line 45 above and at line 83 here:

82 Wilcox: You been doing all right
83 Katie: Yes ma'am, I been doin pretty good, pretty good

In these lines we also witness the shift from how each appears to the other (i.e. looking good), to how their lives are (i.e. doing all right). Reporting on their lives is initiated through an inquiry from Wilcox that attends to and allows Katie to begin bringing her story up to date and to prefigure the quality of that updating. It would also appear that the teacher-pupil relationship is further sustained over the longer course of their reunion by Wilcox continuing to pursue Katie 'as the topic of conversation, as the subject of inquiry, the interviewee' (2002: 551). What has been accomplished is that by the end of their reunion it is only Katie that sketches out her history in the period since they were pupil and teacher.

While there is no snub here, there does seem to be the avoidance of establishing a new relationship. Wilcox has not revealed anything about her history in the years since they were teacher and pupil. The absence of personal history may not be driven by Wilcox, given that in the material presented by LeBaron and Jones, Katie did not seek updates from her former teacher nor make assessments of her beyond their first mutual assessment. As Svenning (1999) reminds us, Katie by her extended self-presentation, could have been taken to lack interest in Wilcox, were it not for the fact that Wilcox played such an active part in keeping Katie and her story as the topic of conversation.

In building a brief narrative of the accountable events of her life between school and the re-encountering her school teacher, Katie singles out Wilcox for the influence she has had on her life. She can pay tribute to the influence of her former school teacher.

88 Katie: I- I'm hanging, I remember a lot of things
89 [y'all told me when i was growing up
90 Wilcox: [Yeah yeah yeah

Wilcox is the kind of teacher that has passed on lessons for life that Katie has reflected upon as an adult. It was not that the arithmetic helped her with her job or that she never forgot how to use semi-colons. The former teacher cannot offer a similar compliment back, though there might be ways in which she claims Katie as a memorable student. Though when she does this - which we saw at the outset of the article - it is designed for entertainment of the onlookers as a discreet indiscretion (Bergmann 1993).

If we consider what is done by Wilcox not becoming the topic during the reunion, it has allowed them to return to their former identities as teacher and pupil and prevented them turning the former relationship into a new one. In fact their re-union resembles the pre-break-up of a dating couple studied by Hopper and Drummond (1990). In their analysis of a conversation preceding a break-up, one party is making 'small gambits toward possible intimacy' (1990: 52) where 'each gambit gets an un-promising uptake' (1990: 52). What was only an emerging, and as yet fragile, relationship as a couple turns toward a break-up through minimal responses. For Katie and Wilcox's reunion, Katie is trying to turn the former relationship into a new if as yet unfounded and unbound relationship. What they might become for one another between acquaintances and friends remains to be discovered. Wilcox, meantime, in keeping Katie as the object of attention and in artfully keeping the encounter itself one in which the hairdressers and other customers are involved, makes no move to change her standing toward Katie. The reunion is an occasion for one party to leave the relationships as a former relationship by not updating their history nor revealing their current status, for the other they show their desire to find a new standing toward the other.

To open the possibility for approaching a new form of acquaintanceship, the parties need to track and make available what kinds of shared enjoyments they might have, and what kind of value each might have for one another or what they might do for one another. Going to the hairdresser might be the beginnings of shared enjoyment, though only in a limited sense. The encounter is not in the realm of shared pursuits that bumping into another at a reading group or running club are. It is closer to simply passing one another in the street. Katie has found the value that Wilcox had for her as a teacher, yet that cannot be a value that she has for her now in a new relationship because there is no new relationship. The relationship has yet to be and the encounter is happening in an inclement place for its cultivation. It is an unplanned reunion in a place with onlookers, overhearers and the limits that they incur. As LeBaron and Jones (2002) bring to the fore it is also a place with other business to do. Jane the hairdresser interrupts their talk, turning Katie's chair away from Wilcox, spraying Katie in the face and 'when Katie begins to stand so as to hug Wilcox, Jane continues to operate her comb and scissors' (LeBaron & Jones 2002: 556). To find a better place for beginning a relationship requires agreeing to and planning a future encounter and the accidental reunion would then become a preliminary to that event.

Endings and beginnings

In their careful account of the reunion LeBaron and Jones always also have their eye on the closing moves being made through the structurings of talk, gestures with objects and movements through the environment of the hairdressers. Wilcox turns and looks into her handbag which 'projects her departure' (LeBaron & Jones 2002: 552) and Katie returns to sitting in her hairdresser's chair. When Katie finishes telling the story of the intervening years it 'presages the reunion's end' (LeBaron & Jones 2002: 552). It need not presage the end though, Wilcox is at a point where she could respond, if only briefly, with her own story of her intervening years. Given that Katie has disclosed her personal troubles, Wilcox is in a position where she could take that as an invitation to intimacy. It is not that Wilcox has not offered sympathy and that that is what a former teacher ought to do. Yet as the ending ends, Katie is likely left with no strong sense that her former teacher has changed from being her former teacher. Wilcox though is equally likely to have a sense that her former pupil is looking to continue their relationship. A sense that would be confirmed when Katie asks for contact details for Wilcox:

180	Katie:	I te- I would like to get your telephone number
181	Wilcox:	Okay
182	Katie:	And you address when you have the time
183		Cause I gotta get over here with Jane
184	Wilcox:	Okay

The request for a telephone number and address is more obvious, if still oblique request for permission to continue pursuing a relationship with the other party. Katie requests Wilcox's contact details in the indirect request format 'I would like to' and 'when you have the time' rather than the direct 'can I have your address' which shows a limited sense of entitlement (Curl and Drew 2008; Ervin-Tripp 1976). Her request acknowledging the time it will take to do this task which does not fit with her hairdresser's desire to hurry her back to her haircut. Yet, as researchers in conversation analysis have documented, requests of this form are based also on the speaker's entitlement to make them. In this case of requesting the continuance of a social relationship, a former pupil's entitlement to ask this of a former teacher is minimal. It is of quite a different order to Katie asking of Jane 'I would like to get a haircut and a blow dry when you have the time'. It is a request to turn this former relationship into a new relationship though built in such a way that not giving the telephone number need not be treated as refusing a relationship with Katie. If we compare this indirect request for indirect information with either 'I would like you to be my friend' or 'can we become friends' it also then shows Wilcox that Katie is avoiding pressurising her and indeed recognises Wilcox's entitlement to decline her request.

In thinking about this request as more tightly tied to relationships it might better be considered as an 'advance' even though that term is more often used in reference to the pursuit of a romantic and/or sexual relationship. Katie has disclosed her recent biography which marks her development, through a number of tough experiences and expanded commitments to family members, to have become a fellow adult. She has given Wilcox a sense of her changed status that would then allow Wilcox to judge whether she would accept an advance in the light of a disclosure which was already a way of advancing toward Wilcox. Katie was not so much pursuing intimacy with Wilcox as she was sharing stories of her difficulties, to offer an intimacy to Wilcox.

Wilcox's response to Katie's advance - 'okay' and 'okay' - is not a refusal, though it is not all that enthusiastic either. Wilcox does not ask for Katie's number in return, nor for a pen and paper. The coolness is something for Katie to assess around pursuing a further meeting with her former teacher. As I have noted earlier, LeBaron and Jones treat the reunion as a resource for closing this encounter as if it were any other encounter. In other words, the participants can analyse the

completion of a reunion's recognisable features and then use them as a resource to finish this particular encounter without orienting toward its particularity as a reunion. Because it is a reunion and not a daily meeting, closing the encounter that is a reunion could either hold the beginning of a series of encounters which could begin to cement a new friendship or be avoiding a new relationship.

Having been separate and then meeting one another again, the ending of a reunion raises the question over whether we will, or desire to, meet again. For formal reunions by their very formality, the reunion happens with only a minimal concern for its desirability. In the chance encounter, in LeBaron and Jones's description of this kind of reunion, whether one or the other will pursue a new relationship with just this other arises in Cavell's 'disorders of desire'. In closing a reunion, given the question is raised, then, around whether we would, or should, want to meet again. Each party makes its analysis of across remembered, former and current commonalities, concerns for one another, virtues of other (e.g. 'I remember a lot of things y'all told me'), shared interests and affections, disorderly desires, to find their desire to the pursue or retreat.

Conclusion

Just as a reunion offers each person the chance to recover, renew or transform a former relationship with the other person, it offers each also the occasion to avoid recovering, renewing or transforming it. Because of the break in our relationship we no longer know how we feel about just this person nor they about us, and in the light of change or the absence of change, we may no longer know them nor they us in the sense both of one another's inner lives and of what they are for us. These then are the further problem of the reunion that the pairing of our social categories will need re-examined because we are no longer teacher-pupil or acquaintance-acquaintance. In that indeterminate state and reflexively tied to it we disclose or hide the constituent events and experiences that could transform those former tied categories. A former teacher might become a mentor or a friend or an acquaintance or just remain a former teacher. Consequently how the reunion is begun, acted through and ended carries more significance than the routine encounters that constitute the continuance of each and any ongoing relationship. Each party to a reunion more or less carefully monitors, as they begin to greet, fill in gaps and then make their partings the other for their desire for another meeting and, may then also come upon their own desire, or its absence, for another meeting.

As I remarked upon earlier, LeBaron and Jones (2002) suggest that reunions have a ritualistic character and that does begin to move toward how they are differentiated from the repetitious character of the other encounters that maintain relationships of acquaintance, friend and intimate. In understanding what a reunion means we need to go farther than 'ritual' and place the reunion in the family of events which transform relationships (e.g. introductions, break-ups, dates, births, graduations, marriages, divorces and re-marriages in Cavell 1981). And from within those rituals to locate the reunion within those events where it is ambiguous whether it will lead to the beginnings (or ending) of a relationship. The unplanned reunion is all the more ambiguous while touched by the music of chance because neither party has sought the other out, nor accepted an invitation to a formal event.

Unlike the routine encounter, the reunion carries a weight that might be a burden because it has returned what was once a relationship to us after we had been freed from it either by transformation or circumstance. In returning this relationship to us, it poses a fateful significance through the reappearance both parties in one another's life. In the face of this feeling of significance the reunion

takes its participants from a consideration of their former relationships, their histories and their appearances to the desire to single out this other party as someone who one wishes to find a standing with and toward or to merge them back into the crowd of former acquaintances and friends (Cavell 2005). To echo the closing of the Orange Book on snubs, in the reunion, in its potential for making and extinguishing of new relationships, it requires discernment and imagination to recover what was shared and to renew or avoid the relationship.

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