Literacy in a New Town School: A Critical Ethnography of the Reading and Writing of Secondary School Pupils in Milton Keynes

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to answer the question: what is literacy in a new town and how do children in schools come to learn it? My concern is not only with official literate activities but also subversive ones. To begin with, I tell the story of the thesis from the point of view of a teacher-researcher. I argue that the starting point must be the relative histories of literacy of observer and observed. I thus narrate my own history of literacy. Then, in order to begin to look at the history of the observed, I recount the history of literacy and education in Milton Keynes and district from 1800. Within this, I locate literacy in the present culture of Milton Keynes as a new town. This brings me to a refined hypothesis about literacy and culture, which leads me to consider theories of literacy now current in order to find an adequate model of what literacy is. I conclude that literacies are contextually and therefore culturally located. I then discuss theories of culture and psychology in order to find an adequate way to make comparisons with pupil literacies in Milton Keynes. The empirical examination of these hypothetical engagements is best done by an ethnographic method. Case studies of literacy learners in Milton Keynes in a thick description of their school and the uses of literacy current in its cultures are presented. In my conclusion, I suggest a mismatch between the official literacy offered as part of the 'newness' of Milton Keynes and the cultural literate practices of its inhabitants.

Acknowledgements

A thesis comes from a dialogue between tutor and student. I therefore dedicate this finished text to my tutor, Mrs Margaret Spencer. I have wondered many times how to express my appreciation of what she has done for me, but despite my raids on the inarticulate, I cannot say it all. Without Margaret's help, ideas, encouragement, counselling and positive perspective the thesis would never have been completed. To me she will always be 'il miglior fabbro'.

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Epigraph

'You can get alot out of being able to read and write so you will be able to say and learn and write things that are important.'

Kirsty (pupil at MK School) May 1986

Introduction: The Story of the Thesis

The focus of this thesis is children learning to be literate in a comprehensive school in the new town of Milton Keynes. A new town such as Milton Keynes represents all that is new, modern, technological and progressive in town planning; so this thesis poses the question: what is new about literacy in a new town, a site based on the premiss that new cultures can be created from scratch?

I will argue that the literacies on offer in what I call 'MK School' are at least at odds with the social practices of literacies in a new town. My concern is with the way in which pupils use their reading and writing abilities more to resist what school has to teach them than to further their learning. I will then argue that these alternative literacies have implications for theories of literacy in culture and for educational practice. This thesis represents my explanation to myself of why alternative literacies occur in a context dedicated to the new. This explanation lies within a view of literacy and schooling located in the interaction of history and culture.

A Practitioner's View

Since this thesis begins with myself and widens out to try to explain an area of common experience, literacy in context, I set out this introduction as the story of that process of widening. In this way I will be 'sorting out the world' through a narrative to put my argument succinctly in this introduction (Meek, 1991).

I write as both practitioner and theoriser, someone involved, implicated and actively working in the school and city which I describe. I have taught Modern Languages in Milton Keynes for 14 years. Quite early in my everyday practice I encountered particular kinds of resistance in my pupils: awkward classroom behaviour, indifference and written protests, such as graffiti. They resisted language with language, both oral and written. In one sense they used their literacy in order to be critical of wider literacy.

As a subject teacher who could yet see the wider view, I had to be critical of the traditional curriculum folklore of compartmentalisation and territory: 'French'

teachers only know about French. This stereotyping by both pupils and colleagues continues despite the Bullock Report which advocated and the National Curriculum, which requires, a language across the curriculum policy. My students and I use language, English, French or German, each school day in educational situations. We speak it, listen to it, read it and write it and interweave all of these. In my lesson preparation and teaching I have to devise ways to enable pupils to use language actively and reflexively in order to learn in all their school work.

A second prejudice I had to overcome was the theory-practice divide. Teachers are inclined to regard theory as without relevance to classroom practice, which is seen as hard, practical and character-testing. My task, as I saw it, was to use theory and practice as means to solve the problem of resistance. Theorising daily practice is double-edged. It can be a salvation in that you can see why things occur, but it can also alienate you from colleagues and add an extra effort to daily work.

One of my premisses as a teacher has always been that pupils are active meaning-makers. This is a belief which brought me into conflict in my career with those who believe in the pupil as a receptacle of transmissible knowledge. I therefore had to believe that pupils' protests had meaning, made sense, were voluntarily created and creative. Not only this, but here were pupils in a new town who resisted even those forms of 'official' literacy which I thought were of value and should make sense. I needed to know how this came about.

This thesis is grounded in my practice and is not an 'objective' study of literacy users. As someone involved daily in the processes of language and learning, my own and those of my pupils, I live my research through intuition, tacit knowledge and conscious reasoning. Literacy is not separate in some 'objective' way from my situation and I must therefore be part of the account of literacy in MK School.

I believe that my intuitions about whatever was awry in language teaching in this school also involved my sense of justice. Students seemed to be denied a right to use their literacy for purposes relevant to them and to their learning. Literacy could have something to do with the rights of individuals as well as with organisations or structures devised to transmit rules and facts.

The Practitioner in Context

My first intuitive conviction was that the disinclination my pupils showed towards learning a foreign language was part of a wider, more general opposition to schooling. No one denies that learning a foreign language in school demands persistence and attentiveness. But this is not unusual. Was there something more distinctive, set apart, about new town literacy in general that made a gap between the pupils' view of literacy and that of their teachers?

In searching for an adequate method to examine our situation in MK School I saw that I had to locate myself and my literacy learning within history, and then do the same for the pupils. In this way I could more clearly define the gap between us. I had to look at what my literacy had been good for and look at the differences and similarities between the pupils' experiences and my own. I needed to find out why I could accept that some of the literacy on offer at school was useful and valuable and why my pupils did not seem to want to.

My narration of my own history (Chapter One) led me to look at what I meant by history in relation to myself as a literacy learner. Particular contexts were all contingent and historically relative. I met literacies within powerful patterns and structures which had been handed down. I might cede to them, reject them or put them to my own uses. I found that I could take on some of these cultural codes and operate within them but I soon felt the need to put my own point of view. Often I felt like a stranger, marginalised and outside, thus coming upon other literacies which were equally marginal and subcultural. Sometimes I could not find authenticity in the mainstream.

Literacy always occurs in a particular material context within a history of cultural patterns both typical and atypical, both national and local. The history of literacy and education in the Milton Keynes area was thus germane to my investigation. Having looked at myself in my relative history, I was beginning to do the same for others by first looking at our common context (Chapter Two).

In this investigation, I discovered the role of power in the historical placement of literacy. I conclude that a history of literacy in any area reveals that some local

uses of literacy are suppressed by the literacies of more powerful social groups. As major social changes altered demands on people's literacies, the powerful groups were generally successful in making dominant forms of literacy, such as the schooled literacy of mass education, prevail over other forms prevalent within the cultures of the dominated, who nevertheless often resisted with their own literate forms. By analogy I surmised that in MK School there might be a contemporary, more localised version of this same struggle in the schooling of the pupils. In that case, attention to these vernacular literacies would show what literacy seemed good for to those alienated from its dominant forms.

There was however a third element. This was Milton Keynes itself because it represents a major disjunction, a new high tech city, rationally planned and planted in an area with a different historical tradition. Milton Keynes is the site both of particular local patterns of literacy and education and of the imposition of a deliberately designed utopian culture. Milton Keynes was new in the sense that it imparted particular concepts and patterns which were concerned with ideas of the modern, with technological progress, with ideas of utopia and with a belief that new cultures could be implanted anywhere (Chapter Three).

I had found three major aspects of the context within which I could view my situation in MK School and begin to view that of the pupils: my own history of literacy and education, the local history of education and literacy in the area and Milton Keynes as new town, a particular context for literacy. I had the beginnings of a hypothesis about literacy: that it could be seen in relation to the observer as well as the observed, within history both national and local, within the struggle over literacies in which certain definitions prevail, and, in relation to Milton Keynes, within an implanted culture of modernisation and newness. My next step was to look at both literacy and culture in order to find models of both and of the former in the latter which would be adequate to explain the opposition of pupils in MK School. I had to find a theory of literacy within culture which had a historical context and a contemporary application.

Looking for a Theory of Literacy

My pilot study of graffiti was an attempt to put together an adequate theory. I decided to write about graffiti because my pupils used their literacy to write on the school and on surfaces elsewhere in Milton Keynes. Graffiti in school are always a written way of expressing resistance. This gave me a chance to examine an unofficial literacy in the context of schooled literacy and to widen that examination out to literacy in Milton Keynes.

Then I decided that a theory of literacy would have to have three parts. It would have to ask: what is it to be literate in a new town School? What is it to be literate in a new town? And what is it to be literate? If, as I had argued, graffiti in school are a knowing literate form which exists because of schooled literacy, I needed to set out what official and unofficial literate forms there were in the school in as comprehensive an account as possible. I needed to know which literate forms were seen as good for pupil purposes and which not. I needed to know what else we could learn from other unofficial forms about pupil literacy. I needed to see the total picture of schooled literacy and all its unofficial antitheses. The clash with graffiti also caused me to question the role of schooled literacy as a particular powerful form of literacy both generally and in a new town. A theory of literacy would have to be wide enough to encompass all forms, both official and unofficial. A theory of literacy would also have to encompass the idea of learning literacy in Milton Keynes as a particular context.

When I looked at the available theories of literacy I found another di vision: between autonomous and ideological theories, between the ideas that literacy can be defined as an entity somehow separate from context and the idea that it cannot. I recognised this conflict also as a philosophical division between the Platonic idealist tradition which states that ideas are in a realm separate from material reality, and the pluralist tradition which holds that ideas arise in material contexts with no fixed reference point in a separate realm of ideas. It was then possible to characterise the autonomous position in terms of the errors or literary 'myths', in Graff's terms, which it propagated (Graff, 1987). Literacies are the beginning point

for a view of literate practices as contextualised and material rather than abstract and fixed. The ideological approach could be applied to Milton Keynes in order to study the range of people's uses of literacy there, what their literacy is in fact good for.

Steps Towards a Theory of Culture

I base my search for an external model of culture on the work of Raymond Williams. In his view, culture is seen as the total field of human activities, of practices, such as reading and writing, within the diverse forms of human self-organisation. In Williams' view individuals create their culture and can change it. The opposing view is that inherited cultural patterns determine what people are. Their education reflects this. My consideration of these views suggests that culture evolves as the result of dialogic interactions between social structures and individuals.

This led me to investigate how individuals, in this case my pupils, interact with the texts of the current aspects of their culture. To do this I applied Vygotsky's theories of learning in a sociocultural context, with special emphasis on the nature of play. I was able to use this knowledge base to assess recent work on teenage subcultural literacies in schools. The emergent hypothesis is that within the cultural patterns available to them, adolescents negotiate, in various ways, roles or practices which reflect their uses of literacy and what it is good for. They may also oppose traditional uses of literacy by creating cultural texts of their own (Chapter Four).

The Methodology for an Investigation

Having found a theory of literacy in culture adequate to encompass the uses of literacies I had found in MK School, I needed to go back to those literacies and look again at both official and unofficial literacies in order to test my hypothesis. The methodology for such an investigation was already present in my approach thus far. It was ethnography, itself a current model or paradigm for looking at the disciplines which contribute to that domain known as English Studies (Chapter Five).

I next made a 'thick description' of the uses of literacy with MK School as a

focus (Chapter Six). I collected texts, both official and unofficial, and student constructions of literacy through questionnaire and interview, concentrating on thresholds in their school careers, the times when literacies become decisive for the pupils' next move; for example, when beginning a new school and when choosing subject options.

My findings show that adolescents in school in Milton Keynes see their literacies in terms of subversion or conformity but rarely in terms of literature or critical awareness, on the evidence of MK School. In school, they meet schooled literacy in the relatively traditional forms now sanctioned in parts of the National Curriculum. Outside school, they encounter literacy within the electronic mass media – computers, cable and satellite TV, electronic games, video and film, and within the contexts of consumption and popular print media such as newspapers and magazines. Both in and out of school they meet literacies as subversions within subcultures. Students at MK School do not lack literacy skills, instead they have limited literacy horizons for good uses of literacy in the future. Within the pastiche environment of what is now a post-modern city, pupils act on literacies to subvert them, to ignore them, to reject them, to conform to them passively or, in rare cases, to make creative use of them. Their subversion of schooled literacy gives evidence of what literacy could be good for if it were better adapted to purposes which the pupils are helped to define.

Chapter One. The Researcher's Story: Foreshadowed Problems

'Teachers' own stories are always part of their pupils' learning'

Margaret Meek 'A Way with Words' Times Educational Supplement 11.11.88.

1.1. Introduction:The Implicated Observer

Anyone looking at literacy in social contexts must also look at literacy in their own history. The teacher-researcher is a participant observer in a community and brings to that community his or her own past, or, at least, whatever part of that past can be discovered, recovered or interpreted, for our own past is often denied or marginalised by the present and has to be rescued. My own case history is therefore part of the problem posed by this thesis, which is: what is specific to literacy in the new town of Milton Keynes? If, for the ethnographer, all disciplines are stories we tell ourselves about the world, then my story is also relevant. I live and work here and I am also a proponent of induction into schooled literacy because I teach here. But as a teacher I am not so much participating as *implicated* in the social context of my work at a school in Milton Keynes, because, as a teacher, I am placed in a ready-made position of authority. Being both implicated and an observer, I can never be neutral or objective because I myself have become literate in certain ways, I have experienced certain models of teaching, I have learned certain ways of learning and I have urgent concerns involved with justice and the validity of pupil language and culture in which I have such a deep inner investment that the impulse to write academically in a thesis such as this springs from the need to explicate this impulse to myself as much as to others. My own history is as much an element of literacy in the new city as anyone else's. Thus I will try to set out below the history of my own literacy, because my history is part of the larger history which we are all still living.

1.2. Childhood and First School: The Clever Boy

I discover first that I am part of the wider social changes which have culminated in Milton Keynes. I was born in 1948 in Gravesend, Kent, part of the post-war baby boom. My parents had both worked for the Co-operative Society and were part of a certain labour culture. My father was a motor mechanic who rose to be a foreman and my mother had worked in Coop shops. One of my grandfathers was a carpenter and lived in the country; my other grandfather worked in a cement factory and lived in the town.

From an early age I was encouraged to read, write and draw. I used to make up long, involved stories with toy soldiers and speak them to myself. There were few books in our house, apart from my father's books on the war and his school prize books. He did not read books, but read newspapers and magazines. My mother and grandmother read light fiction.

I was encouraged to join the library and read voluminously. I read comics and watched Dickens serials on television. As a child, my imaginative world was invested in toys and reading materials with an intensity which I find it increasingly difficult to reproduce as an adult. These illuminations from the third area seem to come by chance or as a reminder of a lost Wordsworthian childhood.

When I went to the local Church of England primary school, I began to discover I was 'clever' or 'intelligent'. By the time I had reached the last class I had become attuned to this success, such that I still remember today my little rebellions as exceptions. Being clever was of necessity connected to being good, at least in class, and being clever had a lot to do with being literate and being able to write imaginative stories which pleased the teachers. Like most people, I cannot remember the mechanics of learning to read, only learning the alphabet in the first class, struggling with difficult readers and being read 'Greenmantle' by the teacher in the last class. Meanwhile I read Noddy books, comics and annuals. My mother read to me at night and, I know, used to tell me stories such as 'The Three Bears' when I was younger.

In my preschool years there had been a rich oral culture of nursery rhymes, spoken and sung, including those on the radio, proverbs, maxims ('a bad workman

always blames his tools'), and extracts from popular songs of my parents' youth. Although there were no attempts to smother me in improving literature, I get the impression now that I was being fuelled for something in a kind way. If a child was clever, it was socially appropriate to buy him or her an encyclopaedia, that was enough. Meanwhile, I was turning what were probably cynical exercises in marketing and promotion, like Davy Crockett hats and Zorro masks, into parts of my imaginative universe.

My parents were part of what is becoming known as the 'respectable working class' (Steedman, 1986). They were not Marxist revolutionaries -my dad still rails against 'militants' – they believed their right was to earn more, gradually, with hard work, and to reap the rewards of their labour. They were ambivalent about royalty, part admiring, part critical but openly hostile to the very wealthy. They always owned their own houses, moving once to a 'better' suburb when I was about twelve. In my preschool years I had often played alone in the large garden. I think my solitariness and special status as first-born boy, before the birth of my sister, is the foundation of a lot of what I am now. I also saw mainly female company. The men worked, the women kept house, this was the way it was done. The men, except for some white-collar workers, were practical men who came in grubby from work and had to wash before tea, while the women prepared the meal. In the house the men did decorating and repairs. They were never seen with books, usually only with the 'Daily Herald' or the 'News of the World'. But they gave me, or enabled me to have, an imaginative sensitivity soon related to books, which embarrassed them, embarrassed me and eventually cut me off from them; and this division may never disappear. Yet my grandfather liked ballet on the television and my mother once sang on the radio.

Another division of labour was religion, except for weddings and funerals. Most weeks on Sundays, the women went to church and the men didn't. On a Sunday afternoon my sister and I were sent to Sunday school where we were given little coloured cards with biblical quotations on them. Later, I was to accompany my mother to church on evenings where I used the prayer book and hymn book. One

of my grandmothers gave me a child's prayer and hymn book as a birthday present. I thought it was something solemn and serious. The model of teaching I had met at primary school had been strict but kind. I liked and respected my teachers. The Sunday school teacher, on the other hand, was didactic and repressive. I, who thought myself both sinful and intelligent and who was also very shy, was mortified when I was asked what I thought of when I heard the word 'church' and having replied 'the choir' was severely reprimanded because the Church was the whole of God's people on earth. This was an encounter I still remember with the kind of teaching which expects you to know something, perhaps something beyond you as yet, without any process of teaching or learning having occurred. I can sense in it now a waft of an older system of education in which the teacher asked and the pupil replied things learned by rote.

Some of these institutions in which I was brought up were what -Walkerdine (1985) calls 'proto-fascist' – the church, Sunday school, my C of E primary school, the cubs and scouts, the shops and offices where I later worked – and indeed it is true that my own view of my character was affected by them. Part of my future uses of literacy was to be the salvaging and the recreation of an authentic self from the damaged and rule-bound models of sin and manliness I was trapped in. Perhaps for some of us of that generation this struggle is continuing and will never cease in our lives.

1.3. Grammar School: The Land of Opportunity

The irony of my passing the 11+ exam was that it was the first sign of the success of my nurturing in the land of postwar educational opportunity and yet it was the first minute crack which eventually became a total break from my background. I went to a boy's grammar school in Gravesend, into a system of individualised self-improvement and the acceptance of competition and into the company of the sons of the prosperous middle classes and of clever working-class bully boys. But I had no conception of a glorious goal at the end. I was still shy, had no social confidence, especially as I was no longer top of the class. All winning was both a surprise

and an embarrassment, but yet it gave me access to a sense of power in myself which ebbed and flowed.

Like everyone's, my background is atypical because it is an individual experience of a whole. We were in the Cooperative movement but our aspirations were middle-class, perhaps like many others; yet I had no sense of the labour community which my parents must have experienced. I had become self-absorbed as a small child and attached to my inwardness and its protection. My childhood was, as Steedman (1986) has put it, giving me the words for what I could not say before a 'landscape peopled with characters', some distant, some close. What I lost when I went to grammar school was not by any means a paradise. This was in fact Williams' move from the 'customary' to the 'educated' (1973) and as Walkerdine says, an ordinary childhood is both hated and desired. Yet I lost something because I still mourn its loss.

Mostly I hated grammar school. There was the pecking order with attendant bullying, based on size and strength, there were more bad models of teaching, teachers wore academic robes at speech day and yet could not teach in a way that would make me understand. For me it was a daytime nightmare to be endured, with some places of refuge, inner and outer, with security and reality elsewhere, but, as today, eroded and threatened. When I look at the pupils in the school where I taught while writing this thesis I think perhaps that this is one of the few common links we share.

Conscious of not being top any more, I acted according to the class mood, awkward and uncooperative when they were, but not loudly so. I just did not know what was going on so it did not seem to matter. This faith that one day I will return to reality has followed me to all the workplaces and institutions based on naked competition in which I have studied or worked, waiting for the authentic to return if I could only wait long enough. When I began to write poetry it had this aspect; it was a lateral uncompetitive process, based often on a gift relationship rather than on winning, based on the risk of making my inner world a public form, if only for a selected audience. Poetry is a safe place, yet it can be a dangerous

place when exposed to another's gaze. But it was a way of 'injecting myself' into my life, which would become a recurring theme, and dilemma.

I scarcely remember being taught anything at grammar school. I can recall learning the difference between 'qui' and 'que' in French, but I do not regard this as education. My own experience forces me to interrogate my view of what learning is and my conclusion is that learning is what illuminates my situation, expresses my unarticulated intuitions and allows me to understand and perhaps to change what is wrong. My successes at grammar school seemed to come when I dared to inject my inner world into my work (which is what I am doing in this introduction): a poem praised in English, an R.E. essay, the art room as a refuge, a trip to France and the sudden flowering of my French, and literature read in German and English A' levels.

Private reading, which I often sited, as I do now, in the time before sleep, was feeding the inner world and had increased since I joined the school library and the town library where I could take out adult books. Required school reading like 'Far From the Madding Crowd' and 'Mansfield Park' I did reluctantly at the last moment, since it took up my own precious reading time. I actually preferred Biggles, then science fiction, James Bond and P. G. Wodehouse. During an English lesson I did a Wodehouse book review which was nothing but a summary of the plot, meanwhile other pupils reviewed Pound and Waugh. My writing about literature barely argued beyond plot, and this was my state when I went to university. But I could read more than I could articulate – despite the problems it is Austen and Hardy that I remember and have since re-read.

One day, in the grammar school library, I came upon John Betjeman's poetry. The mere appearance of the literary criticism and poetry sections in the town library had a mysterious attraction for me. Betjeman's poetry was a revelation. That someone could write about ordinary, even coarse things in unflowery language was totally unexpected. I had no idea of the class basis of Betjeman's patrician style, but then I did not know that my own class had a literary culture, I thought the world of Betjeman and Wodehouse *was* literature. I discovered from

other boys that there were certain dirty books in the library, like 'The Group' – here are the classifications of pupil subculture at work – but I did not dare to take them out. I thought Joan Hunter Dunn erotic enough. But ever since that time, libraries have been another of my places of refuge, solace and personal reality.

Like all schoolchildren, we had a black market culture. Ours was blues music and science fiction. These are both interests that have remained with me, but it is music, especially so-called 'roots music', which represents to me the feelings I want to hear.

My next step on the path of upward mobility was to be encouraged by the headmaster to try for university. I would have been content to stay in Gravesend and get a job as a librarian, but university was, to me and to my parents, the proof of success and in any case I usually did what powerful figures told me. My educational achievement up to O' level I thought of then as abysmal. I ended up with 5 O' levels – poor compared to others – and to my mind there are still large gaps in my general education because of my encounter with teachers who had knowledge but had no idea how to teach. It was language that got me to A' level. Language provides the thread and the link with where I am now. Yet much of my A' level English Literature course remained closed to me. It seemed to me to be where I belonged –to be in a classroom reading literature – but there was a gap between the teacher's perceptions and mine. We did Chaucer, Manley Hopkins, Wordsworth, but it was with Wilfred Owen's poetry that I struck gold. This was the beginning of a rage to explain which took me on to my M.A. years later, because I suddenly *saw* the symbolism in Owen's poetry and I was able to write reams, analysing it with vigorous rationality. It was not until I went to university and began to write poetry that I got back the lyricism which I had analysed away.

In retrospect I can only conclude that it was by injecting some of my inner world into the examinations that I passed them. Since coming to the grammar school I had been overawed by others' knowledge and aplomb. For years, getting through examinations by the injection of self seemed to me a sham, since I believed that instead I must have a vast range of facts at my fingertips. Until I did

my M.A. 14 years later I still believed this and I still meet it in my daily life. I thought I was a fraud because I did not know things in the way others appeared to. The first time I saw a lecturer admit that she 'had a problem' with a concept, I knew I was home. It is to this anxiety, in any case, that I attribute my desire to explain everything in an exhausting 'cosmic' perspective. I think it is a class-based inferiority, yet at school I had friends who were the sons of police inspectors and local businessmen and the only recognition of class difference was in small requirements of behaviour, otherwise to me we were just friends. I was not aware that I was leaving my class. My parents watched these contacts with distant approval, but I wondered why they never spoke to the parents of my friends and seemed to be getting less sociable in their new-found prosperity and respectability when my father got promotion. The family with its interminable ramifications of uncles, aunts and cousins is still their world, even as that world shrinks. Meanwhile, I was going to university. I see myself in the next few years always getting into trains and leaving people behind, thinking sadly of the warmth of home, thinking bitterly of its restrictions, thinking guiltily as how I had taken people for granted and then sitting back in my seat with satisfaction at being away. The adventure was beginning again. But the adventure was the decisive break.

1.4. University: The Mental Explosion

I went to the University College of Swansea in 1966 with 2 Cs and a D in French, German and English Literature, with a patchy intuitive knowledge of the first, a mechanical grammatical knowledge of the second and a strong interest in literature and pop music. If I consider the models of teaching I encountered at university, I could not be sure again that I was actively taught anything. I am convinced that it was reading, discussing with friends and my year in France that taught me. If I were asked to name the real teachers in my life I could name only three, at N. E. London Poly., at Goldsmiths College and at the Institute of Education. There was a heavy literary bias in the French and German courses I took. From the beginning, literature was taught in a way more abstract than I could handle. There was no

attempt to teach the method for knowing, you were supposed to know already; if you were there then it was presumed you were already in the coterie, you must know. I had sent for the whole reading list the summer before beginning university from Foyles, the only large bookshop I had heard of, and I had ploughed through most of it with growing panic about the difficulty of the books and a strange numbness caused by my inability to place them anywhere in my experience. Once at university however, certain writers seemed to hook on to my inner world, Kafka, Flaubert, Brecht, Benn, Barlach, Verlaine and especially Baudelaire.

I always think of my year as assistant at the Lycée Condorcet, 1968—9, as a kind of enlightenment. Exposed to the cinemas, bookshops and museums of Paris, I was suddenly given entry to a world that had seemed closed ,the universe of discourse of the canon of European literature. I strode around it at will. Yet like all my victories, it was two-edged. How was I to read it all in a lifetime? Here was my class inferiority again – I had to know everything – but also I really did want to read it all, I was like a person dying of thirst in a desert who comes upon an ocean. In this way, literacy became connected for me with enlightenment but also with stress, pushing yourself to catch up and achieve. As Walkerdine comments, there is a fear attached to getting out of the suburbs. Work is the only way out and if you stop working, someone may find out (Walkerdine, 1985).

Despite my naive and provincial background, I thought I understood, perhaps even 'knew', Baudelaire, who became my obsession and almost a hobby. I now see that what I understood was the discourse surrounding him, but what I lacked, what we all lacked, we who wrote the smart and knowing essays, was the experience of life which would have helped us understand the circumstances of the writers we revered. Yet it was my conviction that I knew something which gave me an identity and the confidence to discuss, argue and write essays. The language element came a poor second. For French I relied on intuition from my experience in France, for German on my mechanical grammar. For the literature, I relied on my unbounded enthusiasms and whatever elements from the discourse surrounding the literature I had managed to accommodate.

My years at university did not give me a world view. I find that this is something else that I mean by learning, gaining a world view. My ideas were still heterogeneous, but mainly essentialist. I rejected all Marxism, all social context of literature, they were the forbidden, the Other. I favoured mysticism, yet I enjoyed and admired Brecht and saw no contradiction. I had begun to write poetry, much of it based on nostalgia for something lost. Even today, the tone that comes to my writing most readily is elegaic. My poetry was encouraged in France by two poets, one Bulgarian, one English, who enabled me to see and define myself as something else, a poet, someone who could write.

During the period 1968–72, I took on the appearance of a hippy. This horrified my parents. I was now separated from them by books and by clothes, as well as by my rebellious adolescent insistence that I was me, an individual, and not to be trifled with. I had, perhaps from personal necessity, espoused individualism as a philosophy and I thought this to be rebellious. In some senses though, it was only the next step on the path my parents had put me on. When I consider youth culture now, I think of myself then: we all looked the same on the outside, but on the inside we thought this a proof of our individuality, our absolute difference. I had rejected all rule, ritual and dogma apart from the intense sense of self which we thought could lead at times to a merging with the infinite. I tried to get a research grant to do work on Gide, the supreme individualist, but failed.

I now understand this period as an existential upheaval. There were questions about myself which could not be explained by what I had been told was the truth. It took me years, and the reversal of individualism, to discover that the answer to my questions lies in a dialogue between social context and self. At that time I went further towards the pole of self. What happens now I am a teacher is that the urgency of daily life obliterates the past and it is literate activity – writing, poetry, this thesis – which, only as a constant effort, can save it.

1.5. Work: The Banishment from the Garden

It was at this time of my life that the pre-set path became a fall from grace. I was unable to do research and stay with the books I loved. I rejected work in industry as a matter of principle. Soon I was working in a paper factory where I learned to do the 'Telegraph' crossword, then I was on social security, then, for a year and a half, I worked for the ILEA, paying teachers. Out in what is still dubiously called 'the real world', I found a pecking order of petty hierarchies and institutionally sanctioned petty oppressions. My languages began to slip and my literacy became a rearguard action to retain European literature – I read Nietzsche on the train – but at the same time a voyage of discovery into the books of hippy culture. At university I had seen my first 'Oz' and 'International Times'. I began to read popular mysticism – Pauwels and Bergier, Velikovsky – and some Buddhism. Hippy literature was centred on revelation, on secret knowledge, both in the outer sphere of politics and in inner space. It was there to tell you what the system was concealing. Our most pressing concern was how, with the aid of books and theory, we could undo the psychological structures , called 'hang-ups', we had acquired from our background, the things that stopped us reaching our potential as people. My learning experiences at this period were based around discussions with a friend from the office. I think I should have taken this as a signal of something that has now become a conviction, that knowledge cannot be 'had', that it is socially produced by action. Not seeing this at the time, I suffered from the burden of a lack of expertise. I think this is why I still find it hard, in speech, to argue and persuade, because I am conscious that the mental encyclopaedia is lacking many pages.

In 1972, I decided to try teacher training. It seemed like a way to return to study after all those abortive research applications. I was not happy about the practicalities of teaching but LEA grants were readily available. I was accepted by the North East London Polytechnic for a year's PGCE in Modern Languages and I did my observation at primary schools in Bromley and Chadwell Heath, and my teaching practice in a secondary modern in Romford.

Again, it was not the course which had an effect on me, except in the case of

one tutor, so much as the chance to put together my own version of my intellectual search. But now there was one important change, I had to weld theory to practice. The particular tutor who influenced me was a Marxist and it was what his attitude and personality rather than what he did that impressed me. From the books he pointed out to me I learned how to teach. He encouraged me to develop my own ideas rather than deaden me with the weight of accumulated knowledge to which I could not aspire. That the subject of my studies was education seemed purely coincidental to begin with, but I began to discover that I knew something about it because I could, and still do, remember my own -experience at school and could spot injustices. I became interested in the mutual stereotyping involved in teacher-child relationships.

Since leaving NELP, I have had four jobs teaching Modern Languages, now going, often unwillingly, up other pre-set paths – the route from Main Scale to Allowance B to Allowance D and the unofficial routes of the hidden curricula of initiation. My experience as a teacher has given me a passionate conviction that institutional weight is often thrown behind policies which are anti-educational and I have suffered as a result in conflict with these authorities. Those who live within the hidden curriculum know the subtle ways to claw and wound outsiders. I have also discovered that teachers are workers and that 'to be ordinary is to be a worker: terror and desire' (Walkerdine, 1985). During my language teaching, I found that the teaching of Modern Languages alone was, for me at least, not enough. A search was rekindled in me and it still continues. While teaching, I read widely in literature, wrote poetry and, after the chance discovery of a structuralist study of Milton in a school library, became fascinated by structuralism. I now had a burning interest in something extremely difficult to understand and I skirted round it and prodded it, reading books on general linguistics and then ordering 'S/Z' and 'The Pleasure of the Text' from a religious bookshop in Lincoln and grappling with them, dipping into them. By 1977 I had begun an Open University Reading Development course. I think I was searching for a way to explain reading to myself intellectually. Just after this, I learned that an English colleague was doing a part-time M.A. in Language and

Literature in Education at Goldsmiths College. I realised from his description that this was what I wanted to do. Without a grant, I paid for myself to do the course and the contradiction with the career structure of my daily work was further exacerbated. I was trying to be a teacher in the way my inner world declared while the forces of school worked towards stereotyping and one-dimensionality. Here was the continuation of my use of literacy as secret activity, of my il-legitimacy, of my self-division: a theorist in an anti-intellectual environment, labelled a rebel but too respectable to be much of one in practice. My appearance kept changing. I developed two dialects: Standard English for teachers and some classes and my Gravesend accent for others. I produced duplicated books of poetry given to a small group of friends, still in the gift relationship. Here I was recreating the past and giving form to the pain of the present.

1.6. Goldsmiths: The Inner Work

It was in the seminar format at Goldsmiths that I rediscovered the real learning I had been looking for.

It was enlightening to realise that lecturers did not consider themselves experts in everything, that they regarded knowledge as fluid and in a process of production, rather than held or displayed. My tutor would say that she 'had a problem with' certain ideas, a phrase which I still find useful. I realised how learning could be generated simply by sitting in a circle with a group of people and producing ideas. This is the approach I have used with sixth form German Literature classing find this approach to learning best summed up by Rowbotham (1983):

'...an idea of consciousness which is not the transmission of some already established higher body of knowledge but of learning by discovering yourself in relation to others.' (p. 58)

It was the subtle guidance and fluid sensitivity of an adept tutor that enabled us to produce ideas and to enlighten ourselves in the act of grasping for expression.

We read widely in linguistics, English Studies, semiotics and literary criticism, with some history and sociology. My faith in education was restored because I was in the process of being educated.

My M.A. dissertation (Hodges, 1980) was another attempt to build a vast theory. I took the Dell Hymes idea of competence as action and applied it, with the structuralist bias of Jonathan Culler, as 'literary competence' to the reading and writing of pupils at my secondary school in Maidstone. My idea was that there was a historically relative set of limited rules which had to be learned and allowed genres of reading and writing to be comprehended or naturalised before the meaning of any individual text could be tackled or produced. The term 'competence' was also my answer to the rigid, brutal and socially divisive setting and banding of children in terms of their supposed intelligence I had experienced. To me, competence was value-free. I emphasised doing as knowing, espoused materialism, and attacked any theory based on essences. Using two models taken from Barthes (1975 & 1977a) I analysed examples of childrens' school reading books and creative writing.

One result of the M.A. was a conversion experience. But not, as a Christian teacher at MK School claimed, the joy of becoming a Christian after not being one. My conversion was to socialism. Not to a sectarian socialism, but to a critical socialist perspective which to me is the result of years of existential questions which were finally answered by reading. With the ground prepared by M.A. reading, the seeds finally grew, a proof that, as in the feminist dictum, the personal is the political. Nourished by these books, I can, when possible, inject my self into my life and use this kernel of my self which is gaining conviction in the world, even if merely to state a case.

To me this demonstrates another use of literacy, but also, as someone alienated from his background, it enabled me to make a psychological reconciliation with at least parts of my own past, the parts that I carry in my head. Meanwhile the actual area of my birthplace and the attitudes of my family have moved on and become something different.

1.7. Milton Keynes: Another Day in Paradise

In 1982 I began work at MK School in Milton Keynes, a split site comprehensive of 1600+ pupils. Still teaching French and German, I found my ambiguity, illegitimacy and inauthenticity gradually tempered by a certain *gravitas* which came from doing the same thing for a long time and a new-found self-respect stemming from the validation of my once covert ideas on active learning by the GCSE and the National Curriculum.

Although I am still deeply concerned by the way schools negate childrens culture and destroy their confidence by categorising their intelligence, I find that although I try to keep friendly and honest relations with the children, they have become more and more the Other to me as I have to them. We are both, then, suitable subjects for ethnography! In students' eyes, a teacher is intelligent by definition, therefore most children do not want to be 'goody goodies', 'swots', 'boffs' or 'snobs', all terms used by the pupils of MK School. The further subcultures go from my own experience in the 60s – 'hippy' has also become a term of abuse at MK School – with new styles, new sources, revivals and recombinations, the further I feel from the experience of youth. With staff also, because of my autodidacticism and willingness to try new ideas as well as adhere as far as I can to my convictions, I am often seen as the Other and still come into conflict with authority, once being labelled, for instance, 'conniving and subversive' by a senior member of staff at MK School.

One problem posed in this thesis then is the gap between where, historically, my literacy got me and where the pupils' literacy will and does get them in the disjunctive situation of Milton Keynes, whether, even, their literacy is important to them at all. Since my own literacy has been concerned with concealment, refuge, discovery and enlightenment, it takes the writing, the production of meaning of an introduction such as this to enable me to see this very pattern.

This thesis then is the latest stage of my inner project, my secret work, for it was only occasionally in my daily work in MK School that I was able to inject my inner world into a sometimes hostile environment.

In this new town where I have lived and worked for 14 years I find my literacy in question. Staff are suspicious of ideas and intellectualism, children are generally quick to reject anything outside the range of popular culture, a Standard English accent is a sign of cultural superiority and authority and is both respected and mocked, In teaching I often use broad Gravesend, because it makes links, and Standard English to be authoritarian. But I also have a validity in Milton Keynes because I am one among many, I am one of the 'lexias' that has come here, one of the city's positions of discourse. The mental labour of my daily life is vast: notes, lesson plans, forms, reports, minutes, papers, diaries, lists, letters, correspondence, and this writing.

I believe that this thesis arose from the realisation that competence is not a literature processing machine, but is something different, wide, possibly cultural. I also want to know how much the totality of a locality can be explained in relation to structure. I want to deconstruct this culture, with literacy as a focus, particularly in terms of the power which I see working from day to day in subtle ways to continue long injustices which portray themselves as nature and are in fact culture.

The questions of this thesis then are: what is and what is seen to be the nature of literacy in Milton Keynes, especially in the light of its newness and reputation for technological innovation ? Is there anything new about the literacy in this new town? What horizons are presented for those becoming literate in Milton Keynes and what is presented here in terms of literacy ? What is the nature of the setting of literacy: Milton Keynes culture ? How does this culture interact with pupil culture to affect reading and writing ? What is the significance of the gap between my literacy and that of the pupils ?

I am also concerned to rescue the words of children which are marginalised, trivialised and nullified. I hope that this might enable avenues to be revealed in which the way a new town may fail its coming generations might be altered.

1.8. Conclusion: Back to Border Country

The focus of this study is local and specific because, like the key to the puzzle of my own birth and situation as a child, I discover that the missing element in my enthusiasm for structural, post-structural and post-modernist studies is the atypical, the everyday case, the particularity of living here, now. But that is not the whole story.

When I consider the problems that my uses of literacy have caused me, I am tempted to see myself again in the context of those wider social processes of class and gender which affect every atypical case. So far, I have survived, as Williams puts it, 'slighted and enduring'.

'... not the story of man as he was, distant, limited, picturesque; but slighted in a struggle to grow – to love, to work with meaning, to learn and to teach; enduring in the community of this impulse, which pushes through and beyond particular separations and defeats. It is the continuity not only of a country but of a history and a people.' (1973, p. 214)

In an almost Proustian sense, my life has become a theory, my secret work; this thesis and a life as theory are inextricably intertwined. The meaning of my life is to give it a form as theory and narration in order to see it clearly and give it shelter, as such I insert myself not only into Milton Keynes, but into a British tradition of social criticism from 'border country'.

1.9. Summary

I have learned that effective education stems from appropriating a way of knowing, of placing in experience, of contributing to a world view. Such learning takes place in active dialogue with a trusted and respected teacher and can succeed only if it makes and draws real differences and parallels.

The writing of myself into history is thus the beginning point for the discovery of an adequate method of studying literacy in history. I introduced myself as a partici-

pant or, 'implicated', observer, as an ingredient in the literacy of Milton Keynes. I have looked at my past and my literacy in their relative historical place. I as the observer and the children of Milton Keynes have the same history to the extent that we are all part of the historical changes in Great Britain stemming from the Industrial Revolution. But Milton Keynes is a locality with its own history of education and literacy. Both I and its pupils must therefore be situated in relation to that history and its culmination in the present.

1.10. Towards a Hypothesis of Literacy in Culture

This is an appropriate time for studying literacy for two reasons. First, we are constantly being told that there is a crisis in literacy. I shall deal with this issue more fully in Chapter Four, but I signal now that I regard this crisis as a literacy myth among other literacy myths still remaining in common currency. If indeed there is a crisis, it would be bound to surface in the school we are studying and we shall see if this is so.

Secondly, it could be argued that we are living through a major revolution in literacy through the new technologies. At school, children are being inducted earlier and earlier into the use of machines with vast potential powers of information retrieval and transmission, with particular forms of information transcription and notation and particular demands on imaginative understanding. Yet access to much potentially available data is still restricted and highly privileged.

However, children are still learning to read and write traditionally in and out of school. In a secondary school, as well as experiencing the forms of schooled literacy, they are at a midpoint, a boundary area between school and work and at a crisis time in their identities. They are still creating themselves, defining themselves and their roles. No longer children and not yet adults, they are treated as less than autonomous at school, yet they are autonomous (if not mature) in most of their capabilities and competencies, sometimes of necessity.

If the new literacies are characterised by the presence, the immediacy of television, the VDU, the fax machine, children in school are still performing tasks whose

definition of success rests ultimately on passing tests and public examinations, something now made concrete in the National Curriculum. They have to learn to behave in language in certain ways to achieve (or not achieve) these aims. School then continues to act as a cultural gatekeeper. It recontextualises knowledge as school knowledge. It defines what it is to be literate and therefore what are appropriate things to do with one's literacy.

Yet what is striking about public spaces in Milton Keynes is the amount of graffiti written there, it would appear. by young people. They are using their literacy for their own purposes for subversion. They have learned ways to do things with literacy which are in opposition to the ways of the school but which are good for other things.

A study of literacy then needs to look clearsightedly at what children do with their literacy. I have already argued that to do this I needed first to situate myself and my history in relation to the children. This was the first part of a hypothesis which I will construct as to the model which will be necessary to account for the literacy of children in a secondary school in the new town of Milton Keynes. The second part of this hypothesis concerns the insertion of the children into history. It is Harvey Graff who has investigated ways of placing people's literacy in a particular place and time. My study will be based on the kinds of issues raised by Graff.

Graff has suggested three kinds of 'historical conception, or historical epistemology and metaphysic', the first two of which he rejects (Graff, 1987). These two are 'a naive historicism, a historical determinism of any kind' and a 'form of chronologically or narratively oriented historical practice'. Graff's own position is:

'... a conception of historical inquiry and understanding that is at once critical, theoretical, comparative, interdisciplinary and reflexive. History, in this sense, constitutes a series of opening moves rather than a delimiting or enclosing mode'. (p. 2)

This approach, he argues, is based on four elements: that history provides a significant form of understanding, that past and present cannot be dichotomously

divided, that history reveals both the restrictions on human agency and the liberating potentials before humanity, and that history is a 'laboratory' for the study of the processes of human choices with reference to alternatives and outcomes.

Graff details three generations of historical literacy studies. The first generation featured the late 1960s work of Stone, Cipolla and Schofield foreshadowed by Fleury and Valmery in France and Webb in Britain in the 1950s. This was a chronological, mainly quantitative body of work.

The second generation is represented in the 1970s and 1980s by Schofield's later work, by Johannson, Lockridge, Furet and Ozouf, Cressy, Stevens, Soltow, Houston and by Graff himself. This generation further emphasised the quantitative, usually from signatory or census sources, with a greater emphasis on content in the historical interpretation of changing patterns, the relation of literacy to social and economic developments, institutional and state activities, political transformations and ideological aspects, uses of literacy and awareness of the difficulties of building historical interpretations on quantitative analysis. Literacy was meanwhile conceptualised as a dependent or independent variable by certain historians and by others as a non-statistical central feature of cultural, publishing and literacy studies. All such work, Graff notes, has laboured under the spectre of modernisation theories.

The third generation takes its leads from the social-psychological work of Scribner, Scribner and Cole and Shirley Brice Heath in the 1980s. These new directions emphasise the context of learning and use, and the nature of acquisition, culture and traditions.

The implications for the third generation are, Graff continues:

1. Sharper contextual grounding in clearly defined localities.
2. New conceptualisations of context, for example in historical ethnography, the anthropology of education and literacy within the media.
3. A critical examination of the conceptualisation of literacy itself.
4. The study of the creation of meaning, for example between readers and texts.

It would appear then that a hypothesis for a model of literacy to describe the literacies of Milton Keynes would need a 'sharpened' context: a history of literacy in the area and a study of its contemporary context, the new city; it would need a cultural inquiry to discover what precisely the conceptualisation of literacy would be within a culture; it would need a psychological inquiry to discover models of the relationship between readers and texts and it would need an educational inquiry, a turning of the questions raised by this discussion on to the social practices of schooling in Milton Keynes.

In Chapters Two, Three and Four I will carry out this investigation to discover a suitable hypothesis for a model of literacy.

I am placing myself within the third generation of inquiry into literacy. My intention in the next chapter is thus to see what opening moves a history of literacy and schooling in the Milton Keynes area from 1800 can provide in the search for what at the moment I will call a 'model' of literacy able to describe the situation of pupils at my school in the new town now and to decide what its limitations may be. I intend then to set the limits for a social-historical account of literacy in Milton Keynes and district in order to see how much it can explain and delineate a context for a contemporary ethnography of literacy in Milton Keynes.

Chapter Two: Literacy and Education in Milton Keynes and district from 1800

'... I was destined to piece together. for the rest of my life, laboriously and with much in my training against me, the history that really concerned me ... the history of the dispossessed.'

Adrienne Rich 'Blood, Bread and Poetry' (Virago, 1986) pages 175-6.

2.1. Introduction

I have argued that to study the literacy of a particular place, it is necessary to insert oneself and that place into history.

2.2. 1800–1967

In this chapter, I discuss literacy and education in the specific local context of Milton Keynes and district, but the discussion will be set against the general background of what, in the writings of historians, seems relevant to the area. If there is a particular emphasis on the nineteenth century, this is because the Industrial Revolution was 'the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world recorded in written documents' (Hobsbawm, 1969) and because the changes begun by the Industrial Revolution are still to be seen working themselves out today (Thompson, 1968; Harrison, 1984). Consequently it could be argued that the entire historical context of literacy and education in the period from 1800 is one of the rise of industrial power, the creation of empire and the decline of that empire. How could the fact that Britain, by 1914, ruled one quarter of the earth's surface and one fifth of the peoples of the world and had achieved this through military conquest not affect every aspect of people's lives. including their literacy?

My emphasis throughout is not on those middle and upper classes who had literacy but on 'history from below', on the poorer classes whose literacy is questionable. My reasons for this are prefigured in my personal history. I feel an

empathy with the labouring classes because I am from a working-class background. I believe that the culture of such people, who were the majority, needs to be discovered and rescued just as the culture of any group condemned to complete or partial invisibility deserves to be rescued. I think that the middle and upper class people who defined literacy for poorer people have been able to have their say, but. as Samuel writes, commenting on the materials with which historians work: '… the democratic classes … are almost entirely unrepresented by documents of their own, but have to be seen through the eyes of intermediaries' (Samuel, 1975 xiv). Williams also writes: 'If we have humanity to spare, it is better directed to the unregarded men (sic) who were making and working the land, in any event, under the old owners and the new ' (Williams, 1973 p. 50) and 'It is part of the insult offered to intelligence by class-society, that this history of ordinary thought is ever found surprising' (ibid. p. 101). In brief, my major justification is the fact of oppression. The education system which claimed to have liberated these people helped rob them of their past and their cultures. It is the education system which may still be doing so to many other people nowadays (McLaren, 1988) A more objective reason is that agricultural labourers. to whom this chapter particularly refers, were, at least during Victoria's reign, the single largest group of male workers in England, numbering one and a quarter million in 1851, one fifth of the workforce (Horn, 1974).

Part of the social context of literacy in Milton Keynes now is not simply its present, but also the history of literacy and education which make up its past and which are an indivisible part of the locality and of the local knowledge of its inhabitants. I use locality and local here in Geertz's sense: 'a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds' (Geertz, 1993b). I argue that there was a popular literacy in Milton Keynes before the 1870 Education Act, that it was subject not only to historical and social change, but also to the powerful definitions of literacy of a hegemony, a ruling class, aristocratic. religious and industrial which was constantly realigning itself. To some extent at least, I believe that this popular literacy continued despite more powerful definitions of

literacy. My contention is that the development of state schooling has carved out particular versions of literacy which are imposed and partial versions of the literate habits and needs of the frequently migrant inhabitants of this area and that popular literacy has survived both oppositionally and in conjunction with schooled literacy in the area.

2.3. Geographical Situation

The new town of Milton Keynes is still in the process of being built in the Ouse Valley in the north-east corner of Buckinghamshire. This area, one of the four natural divisions of the county, stretches roughly from Newport Pagnell in the east to the fringes of Buckingham in the west and from Olney in the north to Bletchley in the south. The new city was planned around three existing towns, Stony Stratford (where I live), Wolverton and Bletchley, and thirteen villages and hamlets (MKDC, 1970). The history of literacy and education in what became Milton Keynes cannot be separated from that of the whole area of the Ouse Valley, North-East Bucks. or North Bucks. as a whole.

2.4. Industry

The history of the area in the nineteenth century is that of the impact of the industrial age on an agricultural population. According to Royle (1980), the initial impact of the Industrial Revolution was only felt in areas with local coal, iron and water power. Since North Bucks. had none of these, it did not become the site of heavy industry, but neither was it simply a rural backwater. The main commercial routes to London and the North ran through North-East Bucks. and it was transport which was the cause of its transformation in the period of the Industrial Revolution. The first major transport development in the nineteenth century was the opening of the Grand Junction Canal at Fenny Stratford and Cosgrove (1800-1), which also marked the official entry of the local aristocracy into industrial speculation. Foster (1974) in his study of Oldham, claims that the Industrial Revolution was a slow process marked by a gradual redirection in the use of capital, which

culminated in the move from an agricultural to an extractive and manufacturing based economy. Williams (1973) and Marwick (1982) have also described this long preparation period which Williams traces back to the fourteenth century, during which businessmen chopped and changed estates with the old aristocracy, emerging in the nineteenth century as a new composite class redirecting its capital into the Industrial Revolution. Croall (1986) sees this shift as a movement from the end of a collective view of the resource base to a 'private, egotistical view'. In North Bucks. such investment went into transport.

The canal enabled North Bucks. to receive raw materials, and to trade in corn and butter and encouraged local industries such as steam engineering to begin. Markham, who has written the official history of Milton Keynes and district (Markham, 1973 & 1975), points out however that the majority of local industries were based on the land itself, for example brewing and brickmaking, but that the largest single employer of male labour in the nineteenth century was to be the locomotive works at Wolverton, marking the second major incursion of transport. the railway.

Literacy and education in North-East Bucks. must be seen then against the background of major social changes which became evident in the Industrial Revolution.

2.5. Population

In North Bucks., the population rose between 1800 and 1851, when it was 18,000 (Sheahan, 1971). This was in common with the population of Great Britain as a whole which began to rise in about 1740 (Harrison, 1984). Williams (1973) traces this rise to enclosure and more efficient production under an increasingly organised capitalist society. Thereafter two processes began simultaneously: rural depopulation and the growth of towns, again a national trend, although, as Williams points out, rural workers had begun to drift into cities well before the nineteenth century. Harrison reports that, according to the 1851 census, over half the population was living in towns and cities and that today the figure is 80%. Despite the continued growth nationally, population in North Bucks. continued to

fall until the Second World War, after which it stabilised. During this time, population and trade in South Bucks. had grown because of its closer links with London and the South. The new town of Milton Keynes was intended to alter this pattern and to discourage further dormitory building in South Bucks. by attracting industry, business and new inhabitants from the overspill population of London and South Bucks.. The population before the designation of Milton Keynes was 40,000 (Schaffer, 1972). The target population of Milton Keynes is 200,000, and, as a result of its development. the population of Bucks. is now rapidly expanding (Hollingsworth, 1984). In 1987 Milton Keynes had the fastest growing population in Britain with about 7,000 new inhabitants every year (Milton Keynes Mirror, 31.1.85.) The population is younger than the national average with the number of schoolchildren and young adults increasing (MKDC, 1988).

The history of literacy in Milton Keynes then needs to take into account both a certain continuity of population and the discontinuities caused by major social upheavals and migrations.

2.6. Social Structure

Surveying the area in 1862, just before the 1870 Education Act, Sheahan (1971) described its social structure. After the long period of the enclosures, the land was owned by the aristocracy, the gentry, the clergy, trusts or middle-class landlords, including financiers. Bucks. was and still is regarded as a breeding ground for Conservative politicians. In the eighteenth century many British statesman came from Bucks. and in 1995 both MPs for Milton Keynes as well as the County Council were still Conservative. In 1862, there was a ruling class of nobles, merchant speculators and the church. 'Beneath' them were the gentry, old and new, then came tenant farmers, tradespeople and innkeepers, agricultural labourers. servants, lacemakers and straw plaiters. Conditions of life for the labouring class were difficult. Reed (1977) writes of disease and financial uncertainty. There was a strict morality among such people imposed either by the churches or self-imposed, Families were large, wages low and income had to be supplemented by women

and children, and some men, lacemaking, straw plaiting or becoming servants (Lawson and Sparkes, 1972). Horn notes the cramped conditions, poor drainage and sanitary conditions, poor and restricted diet, lack of fresh water, dilapidated and draughty cottages and poor furniture (1974). The only towns of any size before the expansion of Wolverton were Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford, both old market towns providing links with the outside world, and Newport Pagnell.

Thus there was in North-East Bucks. in the nineteenth century, a shifting hegemony of landowners, clergy and middle-class investors. Even before the building of the new town of Milton Keynes, the site was still owned largely by one landowner, a farmer (Milton Keynes Citizen, 7.4.88.).

2.7. Education before 1870

In the marriage registers of 1840, Bucks. appears in the lowest quarter for literacy (Hobsbawm, 1969). However, this measurement is based only on men who signed the marriage register with a mark. They numbered 46–47%. This statistic would fit in with Webb's assertion that the worst literacy figures rarely fell below 50% even in southern agricultural areas (Webb, 1955). These figures however tell us little about the literate and educational experiences of men in Bucks. and nothing about those of women.

Horn (1974) finds that, before they went to school, Victorian country children had a brief but intense freedom to play. They were forced to spend a lot of time alone, providing their own amusements at home or when accompanying their mother and siblings on harvest and gleaning work. She argues that the rural poor were keen that their children should learn to read and accepted the need for education before it became compulsory, preferring Sunday schools.

Differing access to literacy can be seen in the kinds of schools found in North Bucks. before 1870. From the early eighteenth century endowments had been made in at least 9 towns and villages, mainly for the teaching of reading. writing, arithmetic and the catechism to children of the labouring class. It seems to have been the parson who became closely involved in the teaching and the school was

often a corner of the church, although some endowments, for example in Soulbury in 1728, were used to employ a schoolmaster (Cole and Dawson, 1976). By 1840 however the value of endowments had halved.

Where there were no charity schools, there were either no schools at all or dame-schools and Sunday schools. A glimpse of one dame-school at Simpson is given by Cole and Dawson. It was run by Becky Rand, the daughter of a farm labourer, in her cottage parlour for a few pence a week. It is not clear how much was learned in the school, since we are given a picture of Becky sewing while the children scribbled on slates and keeping discipline with a stick or a thimbled finger. To this extent, a dame-school was another way to supplement the labourer's wages and Becky's living was therefore removed at a stroke by the 1870 Act. This kind of picture is corroborated by Horn (1974).

Webb's findings about Sunday schools are more positive (1955). He claims that, before compulsory school attendance began, eighty to ninety thousand children attended Sunday schools, most of which taught reading, while dissenting Sunday schools taught reading and Maths. Thousands of working-class children may thus have learned to read. Webb describes a large working-class reading public centred on chapbooks, almanacs, the unstamped press, histories, cheap fiction and the growth of newspapers up to the mid-nineteenth century. According to Francis Place, the 'radical tailor of King's Cross' (Harrison, 1984), religious tracts had a greater circulation in rural districts where upper-class pressure would have been greater, although they were perhaps read only once or not at all. The successful distributors of reading matter were hawkers and 'back street booksellers' who sold almanacs, chapbooks, broadsides, ballad slips, scandals, accounts of executions and dying speeches. The chapbook trade was however hit by the mechanisation of printing and the improvement of transport which facilitated the expansion and centralisation of newspaper publishing together with magazines, serial stories and novels in parts. Webb claims that the ballad and broadside continued in parallel with these new forms. By the mid-nineteenth century, cheap fiction magazines had enormous distribution, but the newspaper was the most significant new enthusiasm,

despite its high price. Until 1836, the unstamped press provided the principal resource of the working man before the reduction of stamp duty. Newspapers were illegally hired and read in newspaper office windows or passed from hand to hand, read in the pub, beershop or coffee house. There was a hearing public for newspapers in tailors' workshops and in Methodist, radical, Chartist and self-improvement classes, in meetings and in families. Pubs paid 'pot house oracles' to read to customers. This public, Webb concludes, was not a single whole. Many did not read at all, others read only certain things such as handbills, adverts, newspapers or escapist fiction.

For the middle classes, there were no longer any local grammar or public schools with centuries of tradition except the Royal Latin at Buckingham, which, by the nineteenth century, was in financial difficulties (Markham, 1975). One attempt to remedy this was the building of St Paul's College in Stony Stratford in 1863. It is a massive, elaborate, Gothic building which still stands today in the High Street. Its curriculum, in contrast to Becky Rand's, covered subjects such as English Literature, Modern and Classical Languages, History, Science, Logic, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education, and the school catered for 200 'gentlemen', signalling the division by gender which seems to have occurred in private education up to 1870 and in state education up to 1902, when the first co-educational school opened in North Bucks.. Interestingly, after St Paul's College was forced to close in 1895, it reopened as Fegan's Orphanage, which, from 1900–1962, brought over 4,000 London orphans to the area. Before the designation of the new town then, there has already been an influx of inhabitants from a completely different background.

In the market towns there were small private schools, apparently offering either a curriculum for young gentlemen, such as the Classical and Commercial Academy at Newport Pagnell, the private school at Old Stratford and St Martin's Grammar at Bletchley, or accomplishments for young ladies, such as Joseph Hambling's Academy at Stony Stratford, which taught deportment, dancing or sketching.

Before 1870 then, there was education available for all classes but with widely

differing official access to literacy. Middle-class education was divided by gender and offered literacy either as an accomplishment or as the key to the professions. The opportunities for the labouring class to read and write in a school as such were dependent on the forms of literacy defined by the church or on possibly haphazard forms of working-class self--organisation. There were however other institutions where literacy might be learned, in particular the lacemaking and straw plaiting schools, really another form of dame-school.

2.8. The Church and Literacy

The strong local tradition of Dissent might indicate that religion could have encouraged reading, writing and perhaps independent thought among some of the labouring class, for reading was considered integral to these sects and their members were largely the underprivileged. Briggs (1959) for example quotes John Wesley: 'Reading Christians will be knowing Christians'. Williams (1973) claims that: 'The break of so many poor families from the Church of England into the Nonconformist sects is directly related to [the] experience of landlord-and-parson religion' (p. 105). There were several Nonconformist middle-class families in the area. especially traders and merchants, and also Dissenting Academies at Newport Pagnell (1780–1850) and Olney (until 1814) while Oxford and Cambridge were closed to Dissenters. Students training as independent ministers would travel out to villages every Sunday to take services. These men would clearly be literate. There was a high local turnover of circuit and visiting preachers, exposing the population both to literacy and to oracy in the form of rhetoric.

Markham notes a large variety of independent sects, Quakers, Baptists, Particular Baptists, Independents or Congregationalists, Wesleyans, Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and later the Salvation Army. The strongest of these were the Baptists and Wesleyans, whose Wolverton chapel (1870) had more active members than any other church or chapel in North Bucks.. According to Markham, John Heywood, the Baptist minister for Potterspury from 1740–1778 was known for his love of literature.

We might conclude then that reading would be encouraged by the churches as access to the Word of God and to prayer and hymn books and also that dissenting churches might encourage free interpretation as a corollary. Interestingly, in schools, Methodist and Baptists children were generally regarded as second-class citizens (Horn, 1974). Although Webb (1955) claims that working people were under pressure from the Church not only to read the Bible but also to conform socially. Harrison (1984) points out that at a time when an oral and a literate culture coexisted it is not possible to know through what cultural screen, filter or barrier literate culture was received (Ginzburg, 1980) and exactly how working people appropriated literate culture actively for their own ends, how they 'made' their literacy in Thompson's sense of making, that is self-making (Thompson, 1968).

If, as Markham has shown, hymns were part of an oral culture outside the churches, church attendance would require the use of prayer books and hymn books (Wright, 1982). Literacy might also be involved in other practices in church. The congregation of the Particular Baptist Church at Fenny Stratford, consisting largely of the poor with an occasional shopkeeper, was literate enough in 1826 to send their pastor letters accusing him of immoral behaviour and requesting his resignation (Markham, 1975). There is thus evidence that churches did provide an opportunity to use literacy for the labouring class and that this literacy was used actively as well as received passively.

2.9. National and British Schools

By 1870 there were few dame-schools left in rural England. The majority of children in rural areas went to National Schools (Horn, 1974). The National and British Schools which opened in 1815 and 1811 respectively introduced literacy for religious reasons. National Schools were in the majority in what is now the Milton Keynes area, with 21 National Schools and only 4 British Schools being opened between 1811 and 1870. In this area there was a conflict between the two kinds of schools because the National Schools' policy was to educate only churchgoers, while the British Schools wanted endowments to be given to all children. In

fact, as Horn points out, much of the activity of the two movements can be defined in terms of rivalry. The Church of England often included the necessity of Church attendance among the rules for its pupils because they might otherwise flood to the Wesleyans. Even Sunday school treats were held in rivalry with Nonconformists.

Crossman (1974) details the subscribers to the Loughton National School. They were the village squire, a clergyman academic, the Diocesan Society, the National Society and a local family which had held the vicarage for three generations. Land had been provided by the nobility. It was thus the usual group of the powerful and literate which permitted and defined literacy and education for the labouring class, although Legg (1980) claims that, in Fenny Stratford in the mid-nineteenth century, both labourers' children and the children of the better off all attended the National School. Horn (1974) notes the close association of local clergy with National Schools. In some cases school would not even be allowed to begin in the morning until the clergy had conducted prayers. There is a record that the National School at Fenny Stratford had a lending library, but there is no record of its contents. We can only speculate that the books would have been of an improving nature. Nevertheless, the prospect of employment offered by the lace schools often prevented children attending National Schools.

The curriculum in National Schools consisted of three Rs, Religious Instruction, singing and sewing and knitting for girls. Learning by rote was the usual method and standards were not very high. Reading books were: 'very boring or extremely sad and gloomy in content, and sometimes both' (Horn, 1974 op. cit.). Some reading books had errors in spelling and grammar or were inferior, cheap editions. perhaps with sickly moral themes. On the other hand, there were good reading books in such schools and some children at least would be enabled to discover a world outside their own through reading. Writing was learned on slates by practising letters then progressing to copying tasks. HMI Brodie complained in 1860 of old fashioned copy books containing such words as 'Zumiologist' and which evoked only 'dull wonder and a stare, rendering the task more than ever mechani-

cal, and still more perniciously cause inattention, careless blundering, inaccuracies and bad spelling'. Dictation was also used to teach writing and one of the most significant signs of progress was the change from slate to paper, important enough to be recorded in the school log book. In so-called 'home' lessons, large chunks of the Bible or other texts had to be learned by heart, although there was some parental opposition to this. The school timetable had to be approved by the HMI and the amount of time spent on each subject was timed.

Interestingly, Horn quotes two examples of the use of slates to write obscene words, for example: 'Wm. Dunton birched for writing obscene language upon his slate in school' (December 1st 1863, Clifton School). Horn also quotes Thomas Hardy's 'The Return of the Native' to the same effect:

'Ah there's too much of that sending to school in these days! It only does harm. Every gatepost and barn's door you come to is sure to have some bad word or other chalked upon it by the young rascals: a woman can hardly pass for shame sometimes. If they'd never been taught how to write they wouldn't have been able to scribble such villainy. Their fathers couldn't do it and the country was all the better for it.'

Another example of the kind of education offered at National Schools is given by Markham. Dorothy Pattison, known locally as Sister Dora, was brought from the North of England to teach in the Woolstones in 1861. Her task was to get thirty children to read a paragraph, write a letter, make up a shop bill, learn the catechism and understand an ordinary sermon.

Kitchener (1969) describes the contrast between British and National curricula. National School pupils learned the liturgy and catechism of the Church of England, while British schools taught the scriptures without sectarian bias. Despite the possibility that the British schools might have promoted free interpretation in their literacy teaching, the monitorial system and the curriculum may have militated against such learning. In the British Schools, moral training was to outweigh intel-

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lectual development. Juniors did easy reading from a lesson book, writing on slate and paper, and scripture. Seniors did prose reading, poetry with analysis, writing, English grammar, Bible reading with questioning 'to the utmost extent' and repetition of Bible passages committed to memory. Thomas Dunning, then aged 7, went to the National School in Newport Pagnell in about 1820. There he found that, under the monitorial system, he was:

'... to learn but little. The boys who could read moderately well were appointed to teach the young or lower classes. I was one of these and I had very little time allowed me for either writing or arithmetic, and none for grammar or geography.' (quoted by Lawson and Silver, 1973, from W. H. Challoner [ed.] 'The reminiscences of Thomas Dunning (1813-1894)' Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society LIX [1948] pp. 89–91)

Yet the opposite impression can also be gained. At Stoke Goldington British School, as described by Kitchener (1969 op. cit.), there was a concentration on learning to read and write. In 1845, the school reported that their reading books were so well used that they were 'in a dilapidated condition'. Books were also given as prizes after the annual examination.

British and National Schools did therefore teach some local children to read and to write, within the limits of poor attendance (Webb, 1955). Kitchener cites the British Schools in Newport Pagnell, where, according to the Annual Report:

'102 Read the Scriptures; 40 Easy Reading books; 10 are learning to join letters; 87 write on paper; 43 on slates.' (Kitchener, 1969, p. 70).

Horn (1974) records that, from 1839, the HMI became the arbiter of the curriculum in National and British Schools after the government gave its first grants linked to attendance. The HMIs came from a ruling-class background, the older universities, and from 1862 with a drive for 'efficiency' in the use of grants and a

curb on state expenditure (something with disturbing contemporary parallels) the 'Payment by Results' system came into being. Capitation now rested on attendance and the results of an annual examination by the HMI, a system which lasted at least until 1890. The curriculum was ranged in Standards, reading and writing ranged from Standard I, which involved reading from a narrative in monosyllables and writing words on blackboard or slate from dictation, to Standard VI which involved reading a short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper or modern narrative and writing another short ordinary paragraph which was dictated once. In 1882, Standard VII was introduced. It involved reading a passage from Shakespeare, Milton or other such writers or from the history of England and writing a letter or theme. For farm labourers' children, such exams were more difficult because labourers and farm servants were hired from Michaelmas for a year and their next hiring might entail a move, another challenge to the myth of a stable, immobile, rural population. The other field of activity for the Church of England and Nonconformism was the Sunday school. At Sunday schools, most of the time was taken up with scripture reading and the study of the catechism. In the Nonconformist schools the teacher would be a volunteer, in the C of E Schools, the vicar or his wife. Occasionally formal manuals were used in instruction, but in general there was no equipment of any kind. Discipline was kept by the cane. Nonconformist Sunday school teachers were often apocalyptic in their style, full of hell and the devil. In the C of E Schools the vicar was regarded as one of the 'rich folk' and had to be shown respect. That is why Joseph Arch, among others, became a Primitive Methodist preacher.

National and British schools offered an imposed form of literacy with obvious religious aims, but the British Schools offered at least the possibility of free interpretation of the scriptures and taught many local children to read and write (Horn, 1974).

2.10 Literacy and the Lace and Straw Plait Schools

Until 1820, the major part of the female and child labour force in North Bucks. was involved in lacemaking or straw plaiting. The lace and straw plait schools, where children learned these skills, may, arguably, have provided sites for reading. More definitely they were the sites of a strong, largely female, oral culture which may also have extended into adult institutions such as the lacemakers' female friendly society. Female self-help organisations, which also included lying-in societies and blanket clubs, seem to have been little studied (Horn, 1974).

Both the lace and straw plait makers suffered the effects of industrialisation. By 1851, the number of rural outworkers in lace was halved because of the invention of the lace bobbing machine. Yet, as Horn notes. according to the 1851 census, there were still 10,487 female laceworkers in the county of Buckinghamshire, 621 aged 5–9 and 1,424 aged 10–14, while there were, apparently, only 44 female agricultural workers. There were some male lace and straw plait workers and. indeed, there were those of both sexes who did not declare their work to the census. By 1871, the numbers of young lace workers had diminished to 178 aged 5–9 and 957 aged 10–14. By the late nineteenth century, lacemaking had a small revival as a cottage industry feeding the luxury market and offering evocations of country life in a period which saw large-scale rural depopulation (Parker, 1984). There was renewed demand in the 1850s for Bucks. handmade point lace and for Maltese lace, seen at the Great Exhibition of 1851. When machine-made lace finally improved, this, together with changes in fashion and the Factory and Workshop legislation of 1867, led to difficulties for the industry and a fall in child employment. Thus the role of the child worker must be seen against the background of economic fluctuation (Horn, 1974).

Straw plaiting, which was carried out mainly in Central and South East Bucks., was also killed by mechanisation. Originally feeding the hat making industries of Luton and Dunstable, it was destroyed by the invention of the sewing machine and the importing of cheap plait from China and Japan from about 1870. Horn reports an increase in female straw plaiters in Bucks. from 2,992 (1851) to 3,412 (1871),

although those aged 5–9 diminished in numbers (321 to 133) as did those aged 10–14 (669 to 580). Plait schools were run by older women, 'Such schools would be an individual enterprise, set up by some commercially minded or impoverished village "dame" as a little source of income, perhaps to keep her off the parish' (Kitteringham, 1975). Some of the mistresses could teach plaiting, but others could not and kept the children doing tasks set by their parents. According to the 1851 census, 205 of their pupils were under 5 because, as Kitteringham points out, straw plaiting was intended to be a lifelong occupation and it was necessary to start young. Horn (1971), records that, like the lace schools, plait schools originally had whole families working in them, but in the nineteenth century, again like the lace schools, they were occupied by women and children. The child of 2–4 would go to a plait school, little more than a childminding institution for this age group, in a nearby cottage, after some degree of home tuition. Horn (1971, 1974) says that there is some evidence that reading was taught in plait schools, although like lace schools, they were run with strict discipline in order to maximise the earnings of the plait mistress. If at a few schools reading and writing were taught, at most there was simply the repetition of verses from the Bible. In this case, children would attend the ordinary village school on one or two days a week and then spend the rest of the week at plait school. Kitteringham confirms that some reading took place at plait schools. To alleviate the boredom, hymns would be sung 'or there was the reading, or the learning to read of verses of the Testament' (p. 120). In contradiction, Kitteringham quotes Edwin Grey, who wrote about cottage life in Hertfordshire in 1935 to the effect that writing and arithmetic were not, to his knowledge, taught because the dames did not know them themselves.

To the curate of Little Brickhill, writing in the Clergy Visitation Returns of 1857, it would appear that plait schools were at least preferable to other dame-schools:

'I feel obliged to start this (new) plaiting school as the children learn so much evil in the schools kept by the poor and they are confined in small dirty rooms – never learn reading. I require their attendance at the National School for reading.' (Horn, 1971 p. 42)

It was only the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts which resolved the problem of child labour, education now being compulsory. After the age of 10, a minimum number of attendances allowed part-time work, but a permanent severing below the age of 13 demanded success in the school exam. at Standard IV or V, the 'dunce's pass', and 250 attendances per year for the previous 5 years. It was economically important to parents therefore to take an interest in their child's education at this age (Horn, 1974). In rural areas there were local centres for taking the 'Labour Certificate' one of which was St Giles School in Stony Stratford (where my daughters have gone to school).

The danger with Horn's view of literacy is that she consistently identifies it with formal education. Although I would not wish to pretend that there was a thriving literacy in the lace and plait schools, there is, on the other hand, some evidence that literacy existed – in the reading of children's magazines, for example – outside the institutions of schooling. There is the further consideration that what literacy there was formed part of the culture of the lace and straw plait school, largely oral and musical, and that when the schools were wiped out that it became part of the subculture of state schools in their various future manifestations and a foundation for schooled literacies.

Parker (1984) has described how the written word was directly, involved in working-class embroidery. Alphabets and verses were part of the samplers produced by working-class women. Working-class samplers were different from middle-class embroidery and, after government regulations of 1820, it was samplers which came to dominate the working-class child's education. Wright notes that lacemakers sewed their initials on to their pillows (Wright, 1982).

Lacemakers passed on a strong oral culture. They sang songs while working or spoke, counted or chanted 'lace tells'. Equally, straw plaiters had rhymes particular to their work, such as 'under one and over two, pull it tight and that will do.' (Kitteringham, 1975). The lacemakers' songs were also intimately related to the work rhythm and were in call and response form. According to Bailey (1982), Old Dame Harris at the Stony Stratford Lace School allowed no talking at all, but the

lacemakers would sing such songs as 'London's Burning' and

'I saw a goblin up a tree – I saw a goblin up a tree; I looked for one but there were three – Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!' (p. 26)

In North Bucks., there were 'Bucks. tells' dialogues, rhymes and stories which, says Wright, have a locally specific character of gruesomeness, (although some were pleasant and about courting for example), which sets them apart from other counties and even from South Bucks. which has almost no tells. The subject matter of Bucks. tells included: 'coffins, shrouds, corpses, bones, lightning flashes, sardonic laughter and hyena like cries' (p. 180). Wright includes the following among his examples of Bucks. tells:

'Knock, knock at your door. Who's there? It's me. Come in. Does your little dog bite? Yes. How many teeth has it? Six, seven, next time; eight when I call again.'

'Dingle, dangle, farthing candle
Put you in the stinking dog's hole
For thirty-one speak and look off for sixty-two'
(Wright, 1982)

There is some evidence then that literacy formed part of a lacemaker's work culture and that it may have been part of total language use within the particular context of the lace or straw plait school.

2.11. Other Rural Employment

In the Victorian era, it was young workers who filled the lowest ranks of the nation's arms of servants. Between 1850–1900 more girls and women were employed as domestic servants than in any other female occupation. The 1891

census showed that one third of girls in country areas were so employed. In Bucks., the cottage industries and the advent of compulsory elementary education led to a decrease in female servants ages 10–14. Servants' jobs were advertised in newspapers, so that young people would have needed to read them or to have them read to them (Horn, 1974).

If they were not employed as male servants, boys would go into traditional rural craft apprenticeships with indentures, although they may not have been able to read them. By the end of the Victorian era, technology was making craft skills obsolescent and traditional ties were loosening. Apprentices no longer necessarily lived with their masters or adhered to traditional duties and responsibilities (Horn, op. cit.).

It would appear then that compulsory education was part of a complex of social changes at the end of the Victorian era, themselves resulting from the Industrial Revolution, in which the centralised institution of the school was seen as a means of advancement, of cutting yourself away from your parents and achieving more money and different social status. This was accompanied by the abandonment of certain customary family duties and responsibilities and a change in domestic arrangements. Somewhere within this complex, literacy had ceased to be part of a mass of different ways of living and working and had become, in its schooled version, something other than itself, a token or a sign of an aspiration to higher social status.

2.12. Literacy, Education and the Labour Movement

Because of the lack of heavy industry and conurbations in North Bucks., there was, until the mid-nineteenth century, no challenge to the powerful locus of squire and clergy (Markham, 1975). Whereas the ruling class was literate – for example, Dr Henry Tattam, rector of Great Woolstone, was the author of '<u>A Compendious History of the Egyptian Language</u>' (1830) and '<u>The Ancient Coptic Vision of the Book of Job</u>' (1846), the extent of literacy in the labourer's home can only be guessed at.

But there was another site for the learning practice of literacy, particularly

female workers, the labour movement. The period 1780–1840 is seen by historians as the time of the 'making' of the English industrial working class (Thompson, 1968), when conflicts between rulers and ruled changed site from prices to wages and unemployment (Foster, 1974). The new economic relationship of master-wage earner enabled workers to think of themselves as distinct groups with recognisable ambitions. In rural England, the uncertainty of the labourer's life, which resulted in political agitation, was caused by the harnessing of the labourer's wages to the boom-slump cycle of capitalism. This period, and that of 1830–1850, were times of worsened living standards for working people and undermined the existing structure of English society. Agriculture was now being used to feed the industrial proletariat (Harrison, 1984). In North Bucks. the mechanisation of agriculture was experimented with from the 1820s. Yet the first stages of industrialisation nationally were small-scale and restricted to only a few areas. As Foster points out, until 1820 it was the rural outworkers – like the Bucks. lacemakers and straw plaiters – who were in the majority and the industrial proletariat the minority.

There were widespread rick burnings, riots and mass meetings in protest against low wages all over North Bucks. between 1822 and 1830, revealing a groundswell of labourers, Nonconformists, friendly societies and reformers. Although, for example, all of the Bucks. Swing letters collected by Hobsbawm and Rudé (1969) were written in the South, there is still evidence of some literacy within workers' institutions. By 1793, there were 200 friendly societies in the area and 20 in what is now Milton Keynes. Those at Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford had their rules printed and 23 members of the 54 members of the Fenny Stratford female friendly society were 'literate'. The likelihood is that they were all lace workers. Legg (1980) mentions a mutual improvement society which met in Fenny Stratford in 1868, presumably taking at face value the utilitarian doctrine of self-help and self-education which encouraged reading as a way to exercise correct judgement and increase the sum of human happiness (Harrison, 1971).The real significance of the mutual improvement society though is that it was organised wholly by workers without middle-class intervention.

As Webb writes it is unlikely that the radical press played much part in the labourers' revolts in rural districts because of general illiteracy and the price of newspapers (Webb, 1955).

Bailey (1982) has clarified the relationship between male workers and education. The evidence to the Royal Commission of 1867 into the employment of children, women and young persons in agriculture showed the expected division of labour. Men worked the land, beginning as boys of about 6 with bird scaring, weeding or stone gathering, while girls went to the lace and plait schools. By the ages of 8–10, boys were working plough teams. If employment was not constant, there was seasonal work at hay time or harvest or about the farm. Even regular attenders at school left at 9 or 10 or attended irregularly thereafter. For these reasons, few working boys in Bucks. could neither read nor write. If we consider that in the 1830s one seventh of the adult population were paupers, we can see that many males could have considered literacy irrelevant (Markham, 1975). Horn (1972) has discovered that the schoolmaster too had an extracurricular role to play in literacy. Alfred Hart, a private school teacher in East Bucks. used to help local people with letters, wills, signboards, bills, land documents, coffin plates, the names on medicine bottles and on carts, the signing of legal documents and the painting of names on gravestones. Schoolmasters also helped with land measuring, especially at harvest time in order to supplement their wages. It is noticeable looking at artefacts from the area in the nineteenth century (to be seen in the Stacey Hill Collection of Industry and Rural Life, Milton Keynes) that there were items which needed reading; weights and measures, operating instructions on the new machines and definitions of what they were as well as where and by whom they were manufactured (ROBERTS DENSHANGER (sic) IMPROVED COAL OVEN).These necessities applied as much to male as to female work. There were instructions on agricultural machinery and on kitchen gadgets, such as mechanical knife sharpeners.

It was the clergy who wished to set a minimum age for young workers in order to ensure some education for them. They gained their wish in the form of the Agricultural Childrens Act of 1873. On the other hand the farming community

was split. Some farmers wanted to retain their source of cheap labour. Others thought that education and hence literacy would improve the ability of the workers to deal with a mechanised society, a link which although unproven, has also been promoted in studies of literacy (Oxenham, 1980). Bailey quotes the land agent of Tring, William Brown, from a speech in Aylesbury in 1867. He said that a youth should be able to read and write, should spend his spare time improving his mind and should 'comprehend why he does certain things'. If 'better stock, better implements and expensive machinery were being kept', to whom were they to be entrusted? To an 'ignorant labourer who may ruin an animal or spoil an implement in a very short space?' This speech illustrates how the improvement of manual skills in a more complex productive process was *thought* to be connected with literacy and literacy with a more focused mental ability.

Under the Agricultural Children's Act, no child under 8 was to be employed in agriculture except by a parent on his own land and certificates of school attendance had to be shown by children of 8-10. Yet even into the 1880s, magistrates and farmers in North Bucks. seem to have colluded to dismiss cases of non-attendance and to forestall the school boards. In the 1890s, the HMI for Bucks. complained that 16% of registered scholars were absent from school.

Bailey suggests that forcing boys to attend school profoundly changed the social situation in Bucks. where so many children worked on the land. It also, of course, robbed parents of income. But she also suggests that a strong motive for education amongst young people in the 1870s may have been the ideas of Joseph Arch, the founder of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, who was greatly in favour of education for labourers' children (1982, op. cit.).

Bucks. was the scene of some of the Union's earliest strikes. The Union, which received help from the National Union of Railwaymen and Mechanics centred in Wolverton, had its own newspaper, the 'Labourer's Union Chronicle' and the union leaders were Nonconformists. After succeeding in getting higher wages in 1872–4, the Union achieved a maximum membership of 2,050 in the Wolverton area but this declined in the 1880s. Social unrest was followed by a profound

agricultural depression. The disappearance of traditional jobs for boys was hastened as farmers changed the farming pattern to dairy farming to offset foreign competition (Horn, 1975).

By the eve of the First World War, most farmers were still against compulsory education and the extension of the school age. Compulsory schooling, she says, was held to be responsible for restlessness and a willingness to listen to political agitators. Indeed, the attitude of young school leavers does appear to have changed. Education was seen as the route to better jobs for boys and girls. The connection to the rural past was severed as boys went into the railways, police or post office and began to look down on their parents and on rural work (Horn, 1974).

There is evidence then of literacy being involved to some degree in labour agitation, in working-class self-organisation and in trade unionism in North Bucks..

2.13. The Coming of the Railways

The first new town in North Bucks. was not Milton Keynes, but Wolverton. In 1831, it was a small village with a population of only 417 inhabitants. When the London-Birmingham railway, which ran through Bletchley and Wolverton, was completed in 1838, the railway company bought land from the Radcliffe trust, which owned Wolverton, and began to erect new brick houses near the locomotive works and station to house railway workers. A satellite town, New Bradwell was also built. Wolverton and New Bradwell, which still exist largely unchanged, were the first local embodiment of the Industrial Revolution. The Rev. G. Weight, writing in 1852, described the changes thus:

'How marvellous is all this, especially when we remember that only twenty years ago the fox was hunted and the pheasant shot; the ploughman whistled and the nightingale sang where now we have a mighty Factory, a spacious Church, noble Schools, and convenient reading and lecture rooms.' (Croft, 1984)

The new houses reflected new social distinctions with white collar and workers' districts, for there was a hierarchy within the workforce, for example between signalman, platelayer and driver. The railwaymen embodied the new industrial relationship of wage-earner to boss, breaking the feudal chain of subservience. They were their own men.

Wolverton acted as a magnet to the rural young and its population actually rose as that of Bucks. generally declined. Richards (1961), says that, by the nineteenth century many small farmers had been dispossessed as a result of enclosure and engrossing by new landowners Some of these would have gone for work at Wolverton. From 417 in 1831, the population had reached 2359 in 1862, while New Bradwell and Stantonbury had become a separate parish of 2000 (Sheahan, 1971). By 1860 New Bradwell had a church and a church school, the latter with 400 children. The Wolverton Works employed 2,300–2,400 men and boys and about 300 were attending school.

French notes that the predominant male trades recorded in the Census Enumerators' Books of 1851 were skilled metalworking and engineering (1986). Many of these male workers were migrants who were following the Lancashire-London axis. Skilled workers came from far afield on what were called 'long moves' which corresponded to the demands of industry. The unskilled meanwhile came from the pre-industrial rural-urban short distances. Of the skilled there was a mixed population, for example in 1861, 89 from Scotland, 45 from Lancashire and 33 from Nottinghamshire. These workers would have earned higher wages than agricultural labourers.

As the functions of the Wolverton Works changed, there were resulting changes in the population. In the 1860s it changed from engineering to locomotive building and by 1877 to carriage-building. During this period there was more migration from the villages and from Birmingham (French, op. cit.).

School literacy became connected with large classes in a centralised urban setting. The village school as small cultural centre was declining. According to Hyde (1945), the education of railway mechanics' children was seen locally as a bold

experiment. The children were taught in combined British, endowed and infants schools which continued to separate by sex after infancy. In 1847, there were 55 girls of 5–9 in the school learning reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, history and needlework and 90 boys learning maths, drawing, geometry, land surveying and trigonometry. For the rural child this must have been a mental and social revolution. Education and literacy had become a means to gain advancement. Literacy was also involved practically in the work at Wolverton, for example in training as a signwriter (West, 1983) and in the new demands on the railway user, such as the reading of timetables (from 1839 at Wolverton station) and of safety notices (SHUT & FASTEN GATE).

This was the era of self help and working class men and women organised themselves in mutual improvement societies, reading rooms, reading or study groups in Methodist class meetings, Cooperative movement Sunday schools together with informal learning from family and workmates. These were sites of reading aloud as were pubs (Webb, 1955).

In 1840, the railwaymen themselves founded a mechanics institute, a sign perhaps of this desire for self-education, although Harrison (1984) claims that mechanics institutes were in middle-class hands and that political and religious debate were forbidden there, whereas the mutual improvement societies were a working-class institution. In 1847, the railway company minuted its intention to open a reading room, library, lecture room and music hall. In 1864 the Science and Art Institute was opened, but evening classes had been under way since 1843. The Institute was intended to train the railway elite, who underwent a 7 year apprenticeship in response to a constantly changing technology. Yet we should perhaps temper our view of the philanthropy of the railway company by noticing that the same definers of literacy were still involved in these progressive arrangements. Since the 1832 Reform Act giving men of property the vote, local patronage was the strategy adopted by the ruling class. In 1860, classes in the Science and Art dept. were being run by Rev F. V. Harnett. It was Lady Burdett-Coutts who, in 1861, presented 100 'well bound' volumes to the library (Hyde, 1945). Engels (1958) comments

generally on reading in England at this time that in 1844 actual reading standards were poor, children knew perhaps only the alphabet, and religious bodies avoided teaching writing because it was too secular for Sundays. Of reading rooms he says:

'… he (the factory owner) uses the school to inculcate strict obedience in children' minds. He allows the reading room to stock only such books as support the middle-class point of view. The mill-owner dismisses workers who read Chartist and socialist newspapers and books.' (Engels, op. cit.)

It would appear though that labour pride and consciousness were strong in Wolverton and that it was in the company interest to train its men 'up' to railway standards because some railwaymen, especially drivers, were a labour aristocracy, workers in secure full-time employment, and thus liable to be less radical and more inclined to take advantage of the liberalisation offered in the mid-nineteenth century by what Foster sees as a ruling class in crisis after a period of labour consciousness (Foster, 1974). As Harrison (1971) points out, the labour aristocracy was at the top of the labour hierarchy with the labouring class a long way below, and, as a separate group, they had their own hierarchy, status, earnings, trade customs and aspirations. Harrison (1984) discusses the exact status of the labour aristocracy with regard to their relationship to the ruling class. Engels believed they were part of the process of the creating a bourgeois proletariat. The Gramscian view is that they were an instrument of bourgeois hegemony. But Harrison suggests that they did not see themselves in this way. They thought of their culture as 'indigenous and separate though not necessarily always in conflict with middle-class aims and intentions.' This seems to me to describe accurately the railway workers of Wolverton to whom we should be careful not to attribute the 'elemental simplicity' of class consciousness against which we are warned by Steedman (1986). The labour aristocracy consisted of those who were the most likely to be self-educated and literate since they were the group of working men nearest to accepting or at least appropriating middle-class culture.

Training up to railway standards, then, continues the implied connection between technological skills, literacy and education and in Wolverton's case an acceptance of some middle-class aspirations and a lack of social unrest. The original Irish and Scottish navvies, who built the railway and who were mostly illiterate, either settled or left. Wolverton Works then became, in Markham's quaint phrase, one of the 'think boxes of the nation' and the town became, he claims, a quiet law abiding place (Markham, 1975).

The railwaymen were also keen to educate themselves. West (1983) quotes their invitation to a fund-raising evening for the Mechanics Institute in 1849:

'... together with such influential persons from the neighbourhood, or from London, as could be induced, in their love for the cause of education, and the self-education of the working class, to lend it their countenance.' (p. 29)

We may still detect a realigned hegemony in the area influencing literacy and education. In Stony Stratford, boat-building apprentices had to receive theoretical tuition from a local headmaster and Bible instruction on Sundays from a member of the Baptist Chapel as part of their apprenticeship (Adams, 1967). Literacy was clearly seen as one of the characteristics of the good worker and connected to moral worth.

Reading rooms in the wider area were also stocked for labourers by the middle and upper classes. In Fenny Stratford in 1857, a reading room was established by several inhabitants and by the local gentry. In Wavendon, the free library consisted of 350 volumes chiefly of a religious nature (Sheahan, 1971). In Wolverton then, literacy became part of everyday life because of the requirements of the railway company and urbanisation.

2.14. The Local Press

Hall (1986) connects the rise of the free press with the growth of an urban bourgeoisie. He sees the middle class discovering a voice, a source of cultural power and self-definition as a class by expanding various forms of writing, including the newspaper, into an expanded public sphere in civil society created by the expansion of the commercial and manufacturing ranks and the separation of the masculine world of work from the feminine private sphere of the home. Newspapers were for and about this public and gave expression to middle-class ideas and aspirations. Hall sees newspapers as emblematic of the new division between public and private. They were developed outside the state on *laissez-faire* principles, were sold as commodities and catered for the private tastes of an expanded reading public as well as providing a channel for the commercial advertiser.

Nevertheless, as Schofield writes, a new form of publication or an expansion of existent forms does not entitle us to make assumptions about an increase in levels of literacy (1968).

The first regional newspaper available in the area we are concerned with was the Northampton Mercury (c1720) (Markham, 1973).The first local newspaper in the area was printed in Stony Stratford in 1854, one year before the abolition of stamp duty which Hall sees as a sign of a new class-cultural relationship, the freedom not to challenge authority but to start up a newspaper if you had the capital. Hence most people were free only to consume. With the withdrawal of the state from interference with the market, the popular classes were now free to buy but could not expect popular causes to be championed.

Lawson and Silver note the drastic increase in cheap commercial publishing and mass-circulation newspapers in the late nineteenth century. The 1880s saw the spread of 'penny journals' which prepared the way for more modern publications such as 'Titbits' and serialised and paperback fiction. From 1900 the range of such publications was vast and there was increased library provision. Circulating libraries catered to a mainly middle-class audience and Boots founded libraries in their chemists' shops (Lawson and Silver, 1973).

Between 1854 and 1967 in the Milton Keynes area, many competing local papers succeeded, failed or merged. Markham puts the maximum local circulation at 5,000. The contents of local papers can be judged from Markham's description of the Wolverton Express (1901–73), which as well as including world news, gave considerable space to information about local authorities and parish councils. Sermons would sometimes be printed at length, together with detailed reports of bazaars, fêtes and processions and sports news. Local papers carried few illustrations but did have repetitive items such as railway timetables and local directories. What is impressive in comparison with modern tabloid papers is the amount and difficulty of news items, mostly unrelieved of course by pictures.

In his autobiography for the People's Press (1981), Hawtin Mundy writes of how the First World War was reflected in the press. What emerges is that local papers collaborated in a conspiracy of silence about the executions of cowards in the trenches:

'Your local paper would have the headlines "Bill Brown, local lad, local hero get the Military Medal", or DCM or whatever it is and then another week it might have been him "Local lad, well-known athlete, Bill Brown, his mother had a lovely letter from the colonel, 'died in action fighting for his country what a shame'" - that rubbish was put in the paper and yet that poor bugger had been stuck up against a wall and shot for cowardice.' (p. 95) .

Newspaper printers had other functions. The printer of the first local newspaper, William Nixon, also printed school primers and local histories. Adams (1967) mentions G. P. Fardley of Stony Stratford, who, as well as circulating a newspaper, got his main business as a jobbing printer, printing bills, cards, posters and parish magazines. He also operated a lending library, from which such volumes as 'Fugitive Anne' and 'The Hole in the Wall' could be borrowed for 2d. Markham notes that most local printing firms also ran a bookshop.

Before the first local newspaper was even printed, there is evidence of local

working-class publishing. The 'Olney Fire Ballads' (1853) were written by working people and were printed and published as broadsides for the benefit of victims of the 1853 fire in Olney. Ratcliff and Brown (1893) have printed the full text of the ballads, by various local people and an extract may give their flavour:

'On the late Incendiary Fires at Olney

In One thousand, eight hundred, and fifty two,
What I'm going to relate, it is quite true;
Pilfering and robbing on winter nights,
Which put the people of Olney in great frights.

On Christmas Eve, what was worse than that?
They did set fire to a big barley stack,
Half of it was burnt to the ground,
And those who did it could no where be found.'

William Dix

Ratcliff and Brown also give details of early printing in Olney. The poet William Cowper who lived in Olney was the first to get a printing press in about 1782 for his private use. The first commercial printing press was brought down by canal for the use of Thomas Collingridge, who used it to print bills and, in 1834, what was probably the first pamphlet printed in Olney, a sermon by the Reverend Thomas Fry on the death of a vicar, Henry Gauntlett. Ratcliff and Brown then list every book or pamphlet written in or about Olney from the Civil War until 1893 when their own book was published in Olney. As well as a sermon on Cowper's death printed in Newport Pagnell, the material printed in Olney consists only of a journal and a magazine, both shortlived, a sermon marking the incendiary fires mentioned above and other sermons and guide books to the town, made famous by Cowper. They also record that local almanacs were published from 1865-90 including notes

on the town and woodcuts.

Although local newspapers set the agenda for everyday printed matter, there is evidence that working people could use it for themselves and that the popular literacy of broadsides coexisted with the printed book and pamphlet.

2.15. 1870-1976

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, profound transformations affected North Bucks.. The railways killed the coaching trade and dormitory building spread around the railway towns. While they grew, the countryside was undergoing depopulation, which was encouraged by bad harvests, the death of the lace industry and the agricultural depression as well as by mechanisation and the import of cheap American wheat. Emigration from the local area to America and the colonies began in the mid-nineteenth century. Young people from Bucks. and Northamptonshire moved to the new and expanding industries near the railways. Schools, streets and chapels expanded in the towns. Women's work in the towns became printing and brushmaking while the village populations were cut by a third. What is striking about photos of the area around the turn of the century is the sudden proliferation of advertisements which seem to cover every surface, from tin signs on walls, shops and trams to paper bags. Even cottage furniture, such as a mirror, might be inscribed with an advertisement (Horn, 1974). The advent of tinned foods at the end of the nineteenth century must have meant that it was necessary for women and children to read the labels which makes a direct connection between literacy for the individual and world economics. The proliferation of advertising and the rise in living standards were because of cheap imports from the British Empire and because of heavy duties on advertising in newspapers (Webb, 1955).

After 1870, 15 Board Schools were built in the area. The life of the school was governed by the Revised Code of 1862, with payment by results and grants depending on attendance and standard of work. The 7 standards were tested each year by HMIs. Because of this testing, one reading book was read over again until known by heart and it was read aloud to the HMI, it might thus be memorised

rather than actually read. Infants chanted the alphabet and reading was done aloud with the rest of the class listening, such that half an hour might be spent waiting for a slow reader. Dorothy Allen, whose father was among the earliest pupils, records that the main lessons were the 3 Rs. From 1892, a new head insisted on tests in the 3 Rs every week and recitations had also to be learned by heart. The recitations set for the 7 standards were example, Standard I 'The Pet Rabbit' by R. Mack and Christina Rossetti's 'Hurt No Living Thing' and standards 5-7 'Lord of Burleigh' and 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' by Tennyson (Adams, 1979).

Other sources make it plain that school work remained hard, examination-based and mechanical into the 1880s (Lawson and Silver, 1973; Michael, 1984). Although the chairman of the Ragged School Union claimed in 1887 that illiteracy had been eliminated in the sense that any child could now read the Bible or Testament, this ignored the absenteeism from Board Schools, about one fifth in the mid 1890s and the three quarters of a million pupils who did not go at all (Lawson and Silver, op. cit.). In about 1895, there began a new emphasis on the child and learning which began with the child's own concepts, but it was slow to spread and the Hadow Committee of 1931 found that an emphasis on mechanical skills remained (Lawson and Silver, op. cit.; Elliott, 1975; Adams, 1976). In Bucks., a conference of teachers debated the two paradigms of education in 1938.

Although Markham has painted a cosy picture of a settled society, particularly in Wolverton, the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought major upheavals to the area (Markham, 1975). Local boys were recruited for the Boer War. Troops were trained and billeted in the area during the First World War. Women took over men's jobs during the two World Wars. Evacuees arrived in the area during the Second World War. By the end of the First World War, the railwaymen were part of the 'triple alliance' with the miners and transport workers. The failure of the National Strike and the depression of the 1930s however began to weaken commitment to the trade union movement. Local activity based in labour and cooperative movements continued, for example, with speeches and rallies.

People from the labour movement became everything from JPs to preachers,

county councillors to athletics champions but the governing classes also kept pace with social change and moved, for example, into the leadership of the county council (Marwick, 1982). The advent of the mass media, American culture and mechanised transport can be dated, in their local impact, from between 1895 and 1910 (Markham, 1975). Every form of new technology would, we may assume, have brought new demands on literacy.

In 1902, the school which will be the centre of this study, opened as a coeducational fee-paying secondary school in Wolverton. Its catchment area was the whole of North East Bucks., so it did not guarantee local pupils social mobility, winning only 22 university scholarships between 1906 and 1922. It was designated a grammar school in 1945, became a technical secondary school in 1958 and was designated a comprehensive school in 1968. In 1908 it had 175 pupils. In 1987 it had about 1600.

What has emerged from my study of literacy and education in North Bucks. from 1800 is that there is evidence that when people felt the need to read and write, they either helped each other do it, possibly only partially, in imitation of the schools better off children went to, or they asked the acknowledged literates, the parson or school teacher, to help them. It is clear that the landed gentry were not approachable. Schooled literacy developed when employers saw the usefulness of creating docile employees, people who had to be taught not only to read and write but also to do as they were told.

2.16. Postscript

My field notes include the suggestion of a history teacher at MK School that South and North Bucks. were always opposed because of the South's link with London. The north of the county has always mixed the rural and the industrial and has thus been seen as different and isolated. This was the reason why comprehensive schools were built in Milton Keynes but do not exist elsewhere in the county. What my colleague was suggesting is that Milton Keynes represented both a break from the past and a confirmation of North Bucks. as a place where it was not seen

to matter that there was discontinuity.

The new city was designated in 1967. In 1970, vandals burned down the Science and Art Institute in Wolverton. To me this seems to offer a paradigmatic instance of the gap between the planners' dreams of creating a new culture from scratch, together with a new education and a new literacy to match the future, and the reality of importing thousands of people into a supposed utopia. In this process, something is destroyed, the labour pride of old, and something is released, the dark forces resulting from the clash of two unknowns. Milton Keynes is very much an irruption of the Other.

2.17. Summary

The exposition of my own literacy led me to see myself as a literate person placed historically. I as the observer, and the pupils of Milton Keynes as the observed, both have our origins in the broad historical forces which emerged during the Industrial Revolution. But Milton Keynes is a locality with a specific local history within which is a history of literacy and education.

Just as, historically, my own past has been suppressed, so also have the histories of working people and their uses of literacy and education. The major reason for this is predominance of more powerful definitions of literacy which have operated primarily through the institution of schooling.

The investigation of literacy and education in North Bucks. uncovered the dependence of both on certain historical and social conditions. This not only indicates that it is impossible to define literacy apart from such conditions, but also gives a range of the kinds of conditions which have to be taken into account in any such definitions.

These conditions can be summarised under three headings.

Major social changes are the changes in production patterns and therefore in education, training, work, mobility and social circumstances. The moves from agriculture to industry, the development of transport, the increase in private enterprise, migration from country to town, changes in domestic arrangements and

social custom, the technologisation of mass culture, all affect literacy on the simplest level as a change in what is needed to survive in such a society: public notices, advertising, consumption, job requirements, finding work, the ages for compulsory schooling, the 'natural' time to begin to seek work. But on another level they affect the attitude to literacy, its status as a tool for social advancement; and on another level still, literacy will be in a different equation with the construction of personal identity, which could entail beginning to understand the changes above.

Powerful Social Groups are able to control the material conditions of less powerful groups. Literacy is part of decisions about time use, spatial use and hence access, the provision or lack of provision of libraries, schoolbooks; the policies and social functions of those who control book production and marketing, and the press. Ruling-class definitions of literacy have historically affected access, as religious emphasis has done on the use of the Word and the resulting social conflict among sects. In schooling, the ruling definitions of literacy are filtered through a pedagogy, itself with a history and definitions of literacy which are themselves of social and historical origin. Access to literacy also depends on who controls the curriculum, on the size and kind of school children can go to and on the social roles it confers on pupils, not only within school, but also as it prepares them for the outside world.

In this sense, *the dominant national culture* filtered through powerful agencies will define literacy in particular with regard to an attitude to or philosophy of language, the division of labour and the resulting gender roles, and the moral associations of reading and writing.

2.18. Development of the Hypothesis

My summary of the social history of literacy and education in the Milton Keynes area from 1800 has given me further tools for the construction of a way of looking at the literacy of students in MK School.

It has demonstrated first that apparently simple objective evidence as used by historians, such as marks on marriage registers and the progressive models of

literacy that go with them, do not take into account such factors as the existence of vernacular literacies, literate gender roles and the literate demands of new technologies and new patterns of consumption which may differ in different parts of the country and in different social classes (Schofield, 1968).

Secondly, the assumption that school is the site where literacy can be measured objectively, a belief now back in fashion and the centre of conflict, is thrown into doubt by the gap and the tension between the purposes of instructors and the purposes of the instructed in the different institutions I have described. Even if, as Levine argues, schooling in nineteenth century England was an agency for endowing the nascent proletariat with the values, disciplines and rationalities of the new work patterns of industrial capitalism, this takes no account of the diversity of both the paths leading to literacy and their outcomes (1986). With diversity, we also need to look at the continuity of a working-class culture which existed outside but in dialogue with institutions and which interwove the oral and the textual within a shared view of the purposes of language (Pattison, 1982).

Thirdly, it is clear that literacy cannot be defined in terms of only certain chosen texts, marriage registers or school tests and exercises. The totality of literate avenues and the variety of other texts, both oral and written, are ignored. The emphasis on statistics as the criterion of what literacy is also confers a value on number.

What we need rather are ways to look at different contexts of literacy, Street's 'specific situations' (Street, 1984). To look at literacy in context, as Street explains, is to study literate activities as parts of specific cultural practices, set within the context of particular cultures, ideologies and traditions, and, through attention to the world views of the participants, to indicate both consistencies and conflicts within these traditions. Where literacy in Milton Keynes is concerned, this means that the focus will not solely be on texts but on the interactions of which texts are but one part.

Bakhtin reminds us that literacy, in particular contexts, remains only part of the 'languages' of those contexts. He writes:

'Thus an illiterate peasant, miles away from any urban centre, naively immersed in an unmoving and for him (sic) unshakeable everyday world, nevertheless lived in several language systems: he prayed to God in one language ..., sang songs in another, spoke to his family in a third and, when he began to dictate petitions to the local authorities through a scribe, he tried speaking yet a fourth language (the official-literate language, "paper" language.)' (Bakhtin, 1988 p. 52)

The information necessary to develop historical methods of looking at literacy is thus found in those fields which provide *cultural* ways of seeing, where literacy means, social practices in the contexts of the contingent frameworks and meanings which constitute human cultures.

The objects of study of such an approach for me would be the world-views of the participants, that is the school learners and teachers of MK School, and the consideration of the construction of their 'situated perspectives' (Heap, 1991). We are now talking of a cultural history and not a social history.

As I have taken Brian Street's work as an exemplar of the direction my search for ways of looking at literacy must now be taking, I think it necessary to look more closely at Street's 'ideological model' (1984). Street writes that literacies are culturally embedded in social practices and cannot be separated from them. The meanings of such literacies depend on the socialisation of literacy learners into literate practices through institutions, including educational ones. Different literacies have different significances for certain groups because of social structures, such as stratification, which mean that there are differing ways of gaining access to literacies. The ways in which literacies are learned also become part of their significance.

This model meets my purpose in that it provides a framework within which to look at literacy learners in Milton Keynes as they learn literacies as social practices within the institutions official and unofficial of the new town. It enables me locate the particular social structures in Milton Keynes which affect access to literacy, to look at literacies in terms which include the political and to see what significance is given to them in MK School by the ways in which they are learned.

There may be a problem in Street's simply borrowing the term 'ideological'. Williams points out that 'ideology' did not begin as a concept in Marxist theory but was coined by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy in the 18th century as a term for a science of ideas in the empiricist sense, ideas originating not from an ideal realm or from social interaction but learned passively and through the association of sense impressions according to impersonal laws. The concept next gained widespread use in Europe through Napoleon who used it to mean abstract illusion or impractical theory. It was this meaning which Marx and Engels attacked, arguing that ideas were part of material social processes. In Marxism, ideology has three common uses none of which alone is 'correct'. The three are:

'(i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
(ii) a system of illusory beliefs – false ideas or false consciousness – which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
(iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.'
(Williams, 1977 p. 55)

It is the first common use above which is adopted by Street. This use, Williams notes, has not only been restricted to Marxism, for example in Lenin's work, but has also gained a wider use in twentieth century sociology (p 69). In Lenin's use in particular, 'ideology' and the 'social situation' coexist in variable relationships but without the determination of one by the other, allowing separate histories and analyses.

When I use the term ideology or ideological model hereafter, I will be using it in Street's sense unless otherwise stated. In my analysis of the situation in MK School however, I will need to be conscious of the other two common uses of the concept and I will need to see whether Street's model needs to be refined in cases where the other two uses come into play.

We saw in my account of the history of Milton Keynes the beginnings of a cultural description. As in Street's Iran, literacies as practices within traditional

cultures, here church and railway workers, have been supplanted by a modernisation programme. In the case of Milton Keynes the entire city is included in the modernisation process. It is being built to encompass change, but it brings with it a contradictory emphasis on traditional literacy as a route to success within an ideology of newness.

The next stage of my investigation of literacy in Milton Keynes will be to look at Milton Keynes as a current context, with a history and ideology of its creation, as a context where political and economic pressures may affect literacy, as a possible site for the tension between ideologies and literacies, and as a culture where ideologies and literacies have specific forms embedded in specific situations and cultural practices of different communities.

In the next chapter I will thus focus on context to home in on literacy in Milton Keynes by looking at it within the utopian project of the new town movement and in its current particularity.

Chapter Three: Focus on the Context

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the social context of literacy which is Milton Keynes. The argument is that, in addition to their history, literacy events, their purposes and processes are tied to the 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1965) of a locality and its people. Descriptions and analyses of this social context serve the argument that literacy and the symbol systems that constitute it are socially constructed and differentiated in terms of power.

3.2. A Note on Utopias

Building a new town is an act of faith that it is possible to 'relocate new lives in new economic landscapes' (Cunningham, 10.4.85.). Although the new town of Milton Keynes might supposedly have only a shallow historicity, in fact its origins as an ideal, even utopian, experiment lie as much in the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution as do the changes wrought on North Bucks. before 1967, the date of Milton Keynes' designation. A new town, like the rash of literary utopias of the nineteenth century, is a product, even a text, of rationalism and a belief in the increased happiness of 'man' that results from the exercise of reason. Both are concepts of Enlightenment philosophy. At the same time, Milton Keynes is a modern or modernist project in the sense that it presumes that modern architecture and design, industrial and technological progress and production and a capitalist economy can and will work together to create a culture without problems or contradictions (Frampton, 1985).

What reason omits, as Blake and the Romantics were to protest, was imagination. Holmes (1985) has described this distinction between rational expectation and the actual imaginative impact of experienced historical events. which he describes as 'a wild mixture of hope and terror and desperation, the sense of life being radically altered in a way that broke every form and convention that had been previously held' (p. 86). There is a gap between reasoned speculation on the

one hand, for example in planning a new town, and the unforeseen impact on the individual of what has been created. A project can begin one way and turn into something completely different (De Certeau, 1986). Milton Keynes, then, bears the traces of rational planning by a few, principally Lord Campbell of Eskan, the first chairman of the MKDC board, Derek Walker, the architect responsible for design, and Fred Lloyd Roche, the strategist and organiser, but it also has an imaginative impact, in Holmes' sense; the actual effect on the inhabitants' psyches of historical change.

A second aspect of utopias is that they are historically relative. As with science fiction novels of the past, once culture has moved on utopias can appear dated. Not only are utopias relative but they also offer clues to the social tensions of a particular period by the very fact that they try, in their concrete forms, to resolve those tensions. As Manuel (1973) writes: '... since most epochs in Western society have been turbulent, it becomes virtually self-evident that they have produced utopias of one sort or another which reflect their economic dislocations and social upheavals' (xii). The Marxist objection to utopian socialism was that it could not be put into practice because changes in the base structure of society would inevitably be working themselves out. Thus one way to interpret a new town might be to diagnose, from what it tries to make perfect, the underlying tensions, local, regional or national. which it seeks to cure, but which, as a utopian enterprise, it cannot change. Seabrook (1978) suggests that what Milton Keynes throws into relief is:

'... the pain of absent purpose. Everything has to pretend to be something else. It is as though we are all involved in a tacit conspiracy not to tell ourselves what we really think or feel' (p. 236).

Non-literary utopias can also be read as texts (Goodwin and Taylor, 1982; Barthes, 1977b). If we read Milton Keynes thus, we find it has these attributes in common with literary utopias:

1. Self-isolation in a geographical location.
2. 'Articulation': the fresh arrangement of signs or social units.
3. The ordering of the sequence of signs according to a higher order.
4. The theatricalisation of the 'text'.

John Berger supports this:

'A modern city ... is not a place, it is also in itself ... a series of images, a circuit of messages. A city teaches and conditions by its appearances, its facades and its plan' (1980, p. 97).

Although it has been planned around other towns and villages, which are now inside it, Milton Keynes is geographically isolated. If you take a train journey from London to Milton Keynes, you notice a sudden transition from open countryside to a distinctive mix of block-like structures surrounded by foliage, spindly young trees and antenna-like street lamps. The 'articulation' of the new town of Milton Keynes is as a group of functional areas, estates, the city centre, leisure parks, the new out-of-town shopping warehouses all separate from each other.

The higher order of signs is represented by the grid system of roads which spokes out from the shopping centre and symbolises the place of commerce and investment in the concept of the new city. Looking at plans of villages in less 'developed' cultures, say in the, Museum of Mankind, one sees similar areas of social priority and also of exclusion built into the symbolic shape of the village. The theatricalisation of Milton Keynes, unlike Sade's imaginary scenarios as analysed by Barthes (1977b), is the city here and now as actually built. But theatricalisation is as near to the truth of the city as actuality because the feeling of locality built into Milton Keynes by rational planning is that of being surrounded by artificial and deliberate symbols not of one's own making. This is best summed up for me in the quip that the trees of Milton Keynes are not trees; they simply represent trees.

'The architecture is a composite folk-memory of other places; and the city of

the future turns out to be something of an essay in nostalgia. Everything is theatrical, has a borrowed identity. There is a sense of masquerade and self-consciousness; flight, evasion and fantasy are in the air.' (Seabrook, 1978 p. 236)

In Milton Keynes, the relationship between country and city is one in which an idea of nature has been imposed on a landscape which, as we saw in Chapter One, has been in constant transition, through human work, through social and economic change, through mass migration (Williams, 1973). Here nature is frozen into the formal gestures of landscaped city parks and lakes, trees and shrubs, while the fields where some cattle and sheep still graze are called 'leisure parks'. The inhabitants stroll amongst trees and by rivers, refreshing themselves with a sense of history lived outside themselves and part of the past, enjoying their brief immersion in nature in a post-Romantic sense, conscious that there are other less pleasant cityscapes, believing in the utopianism of the new city which can give them this pleasant and planned environment with its semiology of nostalgia and freedom. On Mondays, admittedly along the straight roads lined with sweet-smelling broom, they return to work.

The third paradoxical feature which Milton Keynes also has in common with other utopias since the time of Plato is the vision of paradise as a city. In the case of Milton Keynes, planned and constructed initially during the technological optimism of the 1960's, it was shaped by the latest forms of capitalism and social engineering. Plato's gods and kings have become a similarly despotic, if apparently benevolent, élite of technocrats, planners, cultural engineers and commercial companies. The planners of the sixties seem to have believed in what Northrop Frye has called the 'utopianizing tendency of the productive process,'. Through a benevolent setting of state-of-the-art technology within a beneficent capitalism Jerusalem would finally be built. Since the sixteenth century the hallmark of Western society has been mechanical discipline.

The modern city, unlike the Greek utopia, which was paradise run by slave labour and protected by a standing army, is made to function by massed ranks of

scientists, technicians and administrators (Mumford, 1973). Its stability depends on an optimism and confidence based on growth, expansion, material improvement and a continual striving for an even better life. Breaks in material progress give rise to disproportionate bewilderment and anger (Seabrook, 1978). Milton Keynes bears the marks not only of a liberal capitalist utopia but also of William Morris's Arcadian socialist utopia as described in 'News from Nowhere', a garden where all the buildings are 'trim and neat and pretty ... clean and orderly and bright' (quoted by Ulam, 1973). The landscape of Milton Keynes is precisely like this: low, scattered, box-like structures among fields, flowers and trees. The semiology is that of modernity in and as paradise, mathematically exact, undeviating buildings set in Arcadia, culture and nature in exact balance with a few areas of permitted wildness. In one sense the Arcadian impulse of the town's planners has been to disguise a city as a series of country villages hidden in greenery.

It is also a city of surfaces. The beautiful exteriors of the buildings do not reveal what is really happening (Berger, 1980). All new Milton Keynes buildings present impassive walls, which is perhaps why people write on them. Writing becomes the 'excess' of which Barthes speaks, the violence that occurs when a text exceeds conventional laws of intelligibility (Barthes, 1977a).

The fourth aspect of modern utopias is that they are democratic in origin. Democratic thinkers presume that evil occurs because of a bad environment and that it can be diminished by a better environment, one which must be planned by an élite but which will eventually be initiated by the people. Democracy is not transcendental in its aims, but its goals are commonplace material comforts and personal satisfactions in the here and now. Democracy is precisely the modern-day utopia, secular, concrete in promises of material benefits and accepted by the masses. A modern utopia is a kind of reassertion of a golden age, projected into the future (Ulam, 1973). The danger of such a utopia though is that the disappearance of reality-transcending doctrines brings about a 'static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing' (Shklar, 1973). In relinquishing utopias, we may lose the ability to shape history and so the ability to understand it. Thus,

the relation of Milton Keynes to the Industrial Revolution is as an example of the way it has been thought that in a democracy it is sufficient to ensure an ideal environment without the necessity of considering people's need to shape reality themselves and presuming that they will in some way achieve active democratic responsibility within set limits both physical and political.

The fifth aspect of a modern utopia is that it shares with other products of the Industrial Revolution the characteristic of migration. The great pattern of the last 150 years is mass migration into cities in search of work, followed, only recently, by an evacuation of inner cities by those who can afford to move, and then a gentrification of certain inner-city areas. The migrant is the twentieth century figure *par excellence*, and I too am a migrant.

We have migrated from a past into a present changed beyond recognition. We have migrated through and into language which is dislocated by the same historical experience We have migrated into a society whose codes we have constantly to relearn. People of Milton Keynes are almost all migrants as were the residents of Wolverton before them.

3.3. New Towns

The seminal work of the new town movement was Ebenezer Howard's socialist 'Towards a Peaceful Path to Real Reform' (1898). Howard saw a new town as a complete social and functional structure limited to 32,000 people, with sufficient jobs to make it self-supporting, spaciously laid out to give light and air, away from smoke and grime and surrounded by a green belt providing farm produce, recreation and relaxation. Growth, design and density would be strictly controlled by public ownership of the land. Howard founded the Garden Cities Association in 1898 and in 1902 established the first garden city in Letchworth (which accumulated a large debt.)

After the First World War, Frederic Osborn's 'New Towns after the War' (1918) contained Howard's plea for more new towns. Welwyn Garden City was launched in 1920. By 1931, the Greater London Planning Committee had made its

first recommendation for satellite towns. In 1940 Lord Reith collected a team of advisers to plan postwar reconstruction. By 1943, the Town and Country Planning Act enabled local authorities to buy up areas of war damaged and obsolete development compulsorily. In 1946 the opportunity was seized to enable the government to select sites for new towns, to compensate land owners and to plan future building. In 1945 Lord Reith had been appointed chairman of a committee on new towns in the light of decentralisation from congested (and bombed) urban areas and they had quickly decided on a government appointed public corporation financed by the Exchequer. The Town and Country Planning Act (1947) brought the public corporations into being. Although Conservatives tried to stop the development corporations doing anything private enterprise could do, the Labour government would not give way, although there was agreement that private enterprise should play a part and that the new town assets would eventually be transferred to local authorities. It was announced that the government approved Abercrombie's socialist-inspired Greater London Plan, which involved moving a million London working-class people into 10 new towns 20–50 miles from the centre of London (Berry, 13.8.86).

Schaffer (1972) has written the history of the new town movement. He too traces its origins back to the utopias of Plato and Aristotle; the vision of a perfect town or city, self-supporting and controlled in size and providing a cohesive unit best suited to the needs of the time. As well as other writers of utopias from More to Morris, he mentions the planned developments of Port Sunlight and Bournville, which link housing conditions with industrial efficiency. Williams (1973) however, sees new towns in a different light. After the urbanisation process of industrial capitalism which caused mass migrations into the city, Williams sees new towns as part of a third phase in the developments under capitalism of the city:

'The concentrated city is in the process of being replaced, in the industrial societies, by what is in effect a transport network: the conurbation, the city region, the London-Birmingham axis, the city thus passes into its tertiary development, when it becomes in effect a province or even a state' (Williams, 1973 p. 287).

Cunningham (10.4.85.) considers the new town movement to be at an end. With the New Town Act 1985, assets are being sold, the development corporations are being wound up and buildings which have not been disposed of are being transferred to the Commission for New Towns, 'A huge centralised agency, charged with selling them on the property market'. In other words, new towns are being privatised. Cunningham further suggests that, with the recession, the founding principle of new towns, a home with a job, has been knocked askew.

3.4. Milton Keynes

At its designation in 1967 Milton Keynes was Britain's seventeenth new town. It was to be a new city, the first in Britain; planned on a 21,900 acre site, to house 250,000 people, with transport as the designating factor. The model was the American grid pattern of roads 1 km apart. Housing would be in 200–300 acre units of about 5,000 people in the kilometre squares, the 'neighbourhood principle'. The Development Corporation aimed at 50% owner-occupation. The old towns and villages were to be integrated into this new vision, not destroyed. The estates were to expand to create a coherent city based around the needs of the motor age; 2,000 acres or so were reserved for industry. Leisure needs were to be catered for with parks, woods, lakes, canal walks, sports centres and a golf course. Trees and imaginative landscaping were to be a major feature; Milton Keynes was to be known as the 'City of Trees'. It was also to have a network of car-free 'red-ways' for pedestrians and cyclists and small local roads. Estates are constructed with safe playspaces. All houses have gardens. They were to be set in harmonious architectural settings and were to be served by local shops and pubs and a centrally placed shopping centre. The shopping centre is set on the highest piece of ground in the city and is flanked by the civic offices, a library, railway and bus stations, office developments, a hotel and a multiplex cinema.

The building of Milton Keynes began in 1971 and is designed to be finished by the year 2000, although Sir Henry Chilvers, the Chairman of the Development Corporation, has said that, even when complete, Milton Keynes should be

prepared to change every fifty or sixty years like its American counterparts (Milton Keynes Mirror, 3.1.85.). Inhabitants are therefore in the middle of constant change. In some ways, the building of Milton Keynes represents a noble, if modest, vision of the good life, but its fault is a reliance on design as a panacea for all social ills. There was an overt attempt to design out the economic consequences of the system that built Milton Keynes in the first place, consequences which have become visible in inner cities. Yet the system crept back in many ways, not least in the hidden curriculum of a hierarchy of estates, some better than others, some designed for and attracting, different social groups.

Meanwhile, plans are afoot for an arena and auditorium for sports and concerts, further shopping developments, a Disneyland-style water centre, a theatre complex and an arts centre. A 'yuppie' piazza with restaurant, bowling alley, ice rink and 'Quasar', where adventure games are played with laser guns, has already been built. Although these have created new jobs, Wolverton Works made 1300 people redundant in 1989. It was claimed that the effect on Wolverton would be an initial loss of retail trade but a closer integration of the town into the new city. The railway workers were told that their skills are now redundant (Clarke, 2.4.87.). Part of the railway works was sold off and a car showroom and new Tesco supermarket built.

In her book 'English Journey', Beryl Bainbridge interviewed Tom Hancock, a planner/architect/builder of the new city:

'He said that in the past cities had been built round industry ... What I had to do was to think of this glittering hall of glass (the shopping centre) as a church, a cathedral dedicated to the worship of the credit card, a place where people could come and pay their respects to the consumer society' (Bainbridge, 1984, p. 155).

Basing Milton Keynes on the car was founded on the belief that in the future everyone would have a job and car. The estates were to be little communities of their own, 'tribal settlements', and, in twenty years, Milton Keynes was to be a

'forest with clearings'. The problem had been that the very young, the infirm and the old had been forgotten and that no one had foreseen a recession and unemployment (Bainbridge, op. cit.).

Unforeseen factors have been the decision to lift controls on private investment in the city by the government and to centralise control in Whitehall (MacDonald, 26.6.87.), the curtailment of the rented sector from 1980 and hence the growth of individualised private housing built by developers with less respect for what were to be estates both uniform and harmonious, and finally the social changes which mean that the London overspill population has dropped from 55% to 35% (Milton Keynes Citizen/North Bucks. Herald/ MKDC, 1986). With the incursion of high-tech and robotic sunrise industries, some American and Japanese, attracted as a matter of policy by the Development Corporation (Milton Keynes Mirror 3.1.85.), Milton Keynes is becoming, gradually, a city dominated by a class of upwardly mobile commuters and resident business people working in electronics, pharmaceuticals and research and development, with a large, often part-time or temporary, labour force only 20% of whom belong to trade unions as against the national average of 50% (MacDonald, 1.5.87.) mainly working in service industries.

It has been claimed that because of their direct relationship to the Department of the Environment, new towns are convenient test beds for government policies, particularly as means to reduce council housing (Andrews, 20.4.87.). But 'private' has a more immediate meaning for some new town dwellers. As a resident of Bracknell new town told a 'Guardian' journalist: '... when we came down here, it was the first time many of us had our own homes and our own privacy' (Berry, 20.8.86.). These notions of privacy indicate why the sense of community intended by the planners and 'designed in' has not necessarily materialised. The changes in Milton Keynes are summed up in an article in 'The Observer' (Marks, 24.5.87.):

'... Milton Keynes is a textbook success of the Thatcher revolution. It was a late fruit of the collectivist spirit of the 1960's, designed to house and employ working--class families from London. But industrial transition and the Thatcher ethos have transformed it.

Today it is a handsome and fast-growing new-tech city of curving parkways, glittering mirror-glass cubes and red-tiled rooftops glimpsed on wooded slopes, like an album of snapshots from Southern California or Tuscany.

Two thirds of its companies employ 10 or fewer people, predominantly skilled whitecollar workers aged 25–45. Many of these grew up in Labour-voting families on London council estates. They have moved in with expanding firms, becoming first-time home-owners.'

3.5. Education in Milton Keynes

Education in Milton Keynes is organised on a three tier system of first, middle (or combined) and co-educational comprehensive secondary schools. A Milton Keynes factsheet for 30.8.86. records 75 schools with 29,375 places and two schools to be completed in a population of 129,000.

The situation of schools in Milton Keynes must be seen against the background of government cuts. Bucks. was the first county in England to scrap the school meals service. Yet of the 7,800 pupils entitled to free meals in Bucks. in 1986, 5,000 of them lived in Milton Keynes. According to DES figures, in 1987 Bucks. had the worst pupil-teacher ratio in the country (Milton Keynes Citizen, 30.4.87.). Cuts have meant ill-fitting furniture in schools, a lack of caretaking and cleaning, a failure to repair buildings and, in New Bradwell Combined School, a ratio of only two library books per pupil (Milton Keynes Mirror, 11.12.86.a).

The second general trend in Milton Keynes schools is towards rationalisation, and, to some extent, centralisation. Unlike the rest of Bucks., Milton Keynes has, at present, a growing school population. New schools are still being built, although they are subject to cuts in the rate support grant and some building is having to be delayed, leaving children in huts for their lessons (Clarke, 15.1.87.). There is political pressure on the comprehensive schools to get better examination results. Critics of the comprehensive system home in on the standards in Milton Keynes schools in comparison with the rest of Bucks., conveniently forgetting the background of some of the people who have moved here and their social problems.

As a result, sixth form courses are, in some cases, not duplicated but are farmed out to individual schools in preparation for a 16–19 FE system (Milton Keynes Mirror, 11.12.86.b). and a possible return to grammar schools is being investigated. Large-scale estate building, for example in the village of Shenley, has meant the closing of the old village school, now 'inappropriately located' for the projected growth of population in the area and the building of new schools. Cuts have meant that despite projected shortfalls in pupil numbers it is school places instead which have become short (Milton Keynes Citizen, 6.11.86.b).

The third trend is towards increased private education. There appears to be a concern among parents about the 3 Rs as popularly conceived. A holiday 'back-to--basics' course was given at Milton Keynes Preparatory School in summer 1986 in response to demands from parents (Milton Keynes Mirror, 17.7.86.). Bury Lawn, a local private school for 3–18 year olds has been rebuilt on a new site and 90% of the pupils' parents are from the state-educated skilled working-class. The building of the school raised protests from parents because it is situated almost next to Stantonbury Campus, which is the site of state schools (Milton Keynes Mirror, 20.3.86.). and has taken up the space originally planned for an extension of Stantonbury Campus. Equally, Milton Keynes Preparatory School has also moved to new purpose-built accommodation (Mirror on Sunday, 18.5.86.; MKDC, 1987). The first Japanese private school in Europe opened in Milton Keynes in April 1987. The expansion in private education detailed above was accompanied by a well-publicised Education Day held at the Open University. I would argue that the trend to private education in Milton Keynes can be summed up in the following comment from the Bury Lawn Development Manager (Walker, 8.10.89.):

'I think it is entirely healthy to regard education as a product and I believe when people think it through they will see that it can only lead to private schools becoming more competitive, which has to be for the good. I see no logical reason why the terminology and principles of the market place should not be applied to education. We are selling something very valuable and worthwhile here – the chance of a good start in life.'

The fourth trend is the increasing involvement of private companies and finance in Milton Keynes schools. The Manpower Service Commission piloted technical and vocational courses in eight schools in and around Milton Keynes with the aid of two Milton Keynes electronics companies in 1985 (Mirror on Sunday, 13.1.85.).

The fifth trend is a rising concern with pupil behaviour in state schools. As well as the case of lunchtime disturbances at Stantonbury, there is, for example, the case of Copperfield County Middle School (Hargreaves, 15.5.86.), whose head-teacher complained of financial hardship, unemployment and divorce in the home lives of his children, 50% of whom were entitled to free school meals and many of whom exhibited problems of violence and aggression.

3.6. Trouble in Paradise: The Other Face of a New Town

Beneath the sparkling surface, the optimism and the smugness, the television advertisements presenting a paradise where culture and nature coexist, there are serious social problems connected with the very idea of a new town.

The origins of such problems are traced by Farmer (1979). Rehousing has broken up the matriarchal multi-generation family in the city. The new estates have housing which is more separated, no pub on every street corner and shops which are placed centrally. Patterns of shopping change, are reduced to two or three forays a week without corner shop gossip. Appearances matter because respectability is no longer linked to a particular family. Working-class people have no knowledge of how middle--class people have institutionalised ways of contacting and judging neighbours. Husband and wife are thrown together at night because he will not be able to meet his mates and she may not be able to work because of the lack of female kin as minders. Husband and wife become dependent only on each other and lives become home-centred. The house and not the neighbourhood becomes the focus of existence. The nuclear family predominates because contact between the young and their grandparents is lost. Friends and neighbours become a substitute for the extended family. New furniture is necessary to provide visible symbols of social standing.

Many of these mistakes, though not all, were made in Milton Keynes. 'Local' shops still exist in the older towns - for example in Wolverton - and corner shop gossip can still be heard there, but on the new estates there are small but soulless chain stores, few and centralised, while the whole thrust of shopping in the city is to massive concentrations designed to be visited by car and consisting of massive supermarkets and small specialist shops. Schools, churches and community centres are built into the estates and are within reach. Milton Keynes is well-known for its large variety of small clubs and societies. But there are still the many who are lonely, cut off and isolated.

Seabrook writes 'There is something of the contrived happiness of holiday camps, the hysterical ecstasy over quite ordinary products from television commercials. The discipline to conform penetrates people's lives: the houses are new, they cry out for new curtains, new carpets, new furniture, almost for a remodelled and perfected human being. People sometimes feel they cannot live up to it. However free their choices, they have no control over the setting in which those choices are exercised. There is no place here for deviants or tramps. You would have to be very brave not to comply with the paradox of living privately in a profoundly conforming way. It is almost as though people's lives were turned inside out through the picture windows: everybody is living a spectacle, a piece of theatre, a charade of dehumanised inauthenticity, in which human beings are encouraged to assimilate themselves to the cold perfection of things.' (Seabrook, 1978 p. 239)

Not everyone shares in the conspicuous wealth and consumption in the city. Manpower Services Commission figures show an increasing gap between haves and have-nots in the city (Mirror on Sunday, 29.9.85.). In terms of the family, over half of local marriages end in divorce (O'Neill, 17.9.87.). There was a 9% rise in marriage guidance council appointments in 1985/6 (MacKinnon, 27.11.86.). The suggested reasons were a high influx of newcomers without family or friends, the time it takes to build up a network of friends with whom you can discuss problems, the financial pressures of moving and setting up home, the danger points of the first year of marriage, children going to or leaving school, unemployment and the

lack of communication between couples. There is a rise in child abuse cases (Scawen, 25.3.88.). Physical neglect is the chief characteristic of child abuse in Milton Keynes, followed by emotional abuse and physical injury (MacDonald, 5.6.87.). There has also been a significant rise in psychiatric cases among adults (Milton Keynes Mirror, 7.5.87.) which is blamed on unemployment, poor housing, difficulties with adolescents, incest and deaths. Calls to the Samaritans rose by 50% in 1986 and 37% in 1987 with many threatened suicides (Wilson, 26.2.87.). This desperation is attributed to the lack of an extended family, money problems and unemployment.

For children and teenagers, problems include the lack of accommodation for the single young although staying at home can cause family breakdown and youth homelessness (Clarke, 15.1.87.). Homelessness rose by 75% in 1986, perhaps because of the curtailment of council housing (Milton Keynes Citizen, 2.1.87.). There is a growing problem of drug abuse and butane gas sniffing (Mirror on Sunday, 3.3.85.). Other problems are an increase in under-age drinking (Oxley, 10.4.87.), below average employment opportunities for Afro-Caribbeans and Bangladeshis – although African Asians, Indians and Pakistanis enjoy lower unemployment than the city as a whole (MacKinnon, 19.9.85.) – unemployment (James, 7.4.85.), petty crime (Wilson, 10.3.88.) and low wages (Milton Keynes Mirror, 4.5.87.). Low wages have been regarded as the key to the city's success by Conservatives on the county council (Milton Keynes Citizen, 4.6.87.). In contrast, a WEA tutor has said:

'Firms have moved to the city to get rid of active trade unionists. Milton Keynes is not the prosperous, high-tech area it is made out to be. In reality there are many small firms and a lot of low-paid workers!!' (Milton Keynes Citizen, 6.11.86.a).

In 1986 it was reported that the crime rate had risen by 67% in 1981–5 and burglaries had gone up by 46%. A police survey in 1988 found that people feared property crimes such as burglary and vandalism more than assault and rape

(O'Neill, 31.3.88.). Theft is indeed the most frequent crime in the area (MacKinnon, 24.9.87.) and one in ten local people are victims of crime (O'Neill, 9.7.87.).

There have also been examples of large-scale public disorder. In 1986, 200 youths rioted on New Year's Eve in Newport Pagnell, an arsenal of weapons was discovered in Bletchley and 18 youths were arrested when violence erupted for the third time in a month between school gangs. In March 1988, 50–60 vandals ran riot in Bletchley (Edwards, 10.4.88.). Old people on the Lakes Estate, Bletchley are reportedly scared to go out even in daylight for fear of harassment and attacks (Milton Keynes Mirror, 2.4.87.). There seems little understanding of the causes of such violence. A police spokesman said of the gang fights in Bletchley: 'There does not seem to be any rhyme or reason for what has been going on' (Evans, 23.10.86.). The lack of a sense of history and the idea that Milton Keynes might have problems which have occurred before do not seem to be acknowledged. Yet rioting has a long tradition in England as an instrument of political behaviour (Harrison, 1984).

However, in Milton Keynes, there can be an official refusal to countenance anything bad about the city. For example, when Channel Four broadcast a documentary critical of Milton Keynes in October 1986, concentrating on unemployment, housing and crime, the reaction of the local press demonstrated several assumptions which indicate the stance of official opinion (Milton Keynes Mirror, 16.10.86.). These assumptions are, first, that those with local knowledge of the city regard it as a wonderful place to live. Secondly, any media criticism of Milton Keynes is wrong because critics are 'anything-for-a-laugh comics, Fleet Street journalists, jealous outsiders and the odd disillusioned locals'. In fact, the refusal to acknowledge the political and social reasons for problems and their intimate connection with new towns is spectacular in its absence.

3.7. Milton Keynes and the Past

In the last section, I pointed out the gap between the problems of a new town and its public image. Newness in Milton Keynes also brings with it a particular relationship with the past. The local past is contrasted with the soulless, rootless

present, in local newspapers and books, to show the past's rootedness in the geography of the area and its stable communities (Rafferty, 20.3.86). In contrast to the violence and vandalism described every week in local newspapers, the past appears an unreal nostalgic world of innocence and lost memories.

Milton Keynes, built on an American model, also has an American relationship to the past. First, the past is implicitly a *tabula rasa* and the emphasis is on the present and the immediate future (Seabrook, 1978; Lurie, 1986). Secondly, the priority afforded to fluidity, movement and change, on a rapid turnover of goods and messages gives rise to a kind of cultural tourism (Tanner, 1976; Chambers, 1985; Eco, 1987). Thirdly, a new town which reproduces the best of everything from elsewhere may trap its inhabitants in pseudo-realities, causing them not to trust their environment (Tanner, 1976). Milton Keynes is a city made of myths, of fictions which we are constantly sifting for reality.

3.8. Visible Literacy in Milton Keynes: The Presentation of the City

The Milton Keynes Development Corporation has made extensive use of advertising to attract people and businesses to Milton Keynes. The new town has entered public consciousness through television, hoardings and colour magazines, through brochures, posters and other publicity material. The city has continually sent out messages about itself which present a certain image to viewers and readers. The city itself presents an appearance of large blank spaces interspersed with advertisements, signs and hoardings. In a sense, the physical appearance of the buildings in such a planned environment can also be 'read' as giving messages about the status and purposes envisaged by the architect in the new town context. As we will see in Chapter Four, the answer to this constant stream of official communication has been graffiti.

Sources of Literacy

It would be foolish to try to itemise every source of literacy in Milton Keynes and every object to be used for literate purposes. This would be beyond even the

thick description. I will indicate the major sources of official literacy and then discuss them in terms of what can be said about the organisation and uses of literacy in a new town.

Milton Keynes has only three libraries, in the centre, the north and the south of the city. All are now sources not only of books but of videos and cassettes or CDs. There are bookshops only in the City Centre, excepting a Christian bookshop in Wolverton and a small local bookshop in Stony Stratford. Oakleaf, a radical bookshop in Wolverton, closed down in the 1980s. All estates and towns have one or more stores which sell newspapers and some books as well as sweets, cards and, in same cases, groceries. These are parts of larger chains, such as Martin McColl and sell a limited stock which is common to all branches. This is true also of W. H. Smith in the City Centre.

As with education (see section 3.5.), the general picture of provision of books and newspapers etc. is of centralisation and uniformity. This is as true of the libraries as it is of commercial sources of books. This can be seen, for example, in the organisation in 1987 of a public book fair by the Library and two City Centre bookshops. The event included authors, TV and show business stars. This was the public promotional face of literacy, with an emphasis on celebrity. The image presented of writers in the local press is invariably connected with publication, be it of novels, local histories or novelty books like 'Letters to Santa'. Other forms of writing are made invisible, at least as examples of publicly acknowledged success.

The overt face of literacy in Milton Keynes then is publication within a market. This is also true of local newspapers which are now largely free and run entirely on advertising (Cunningham, 1.8.88.). Cunningham attributes the rise of free papers to the increased use of computers in newspaper production and the decrease in print union power. Advertising dominates news in such papers and distribution is based on shopping catchment areas. Free newspapers are thus printed in 'series', apparently local to one area but actually uniform in many ways. They are run by companies which are not sited in the local area. For example the North Bucks. Herald was owned by the International Thomson organisation and the

Milton Keynes Citizen is run by a Peterborough based company. The growth of free newspapers in the area continues the theme not only of centralisation and uniformity but also of the increased origin of sources of literacy in the growth of technology in service to the market place.

The same themes apply to the visual media, also partly a source of literacy. In 1985 a 10 screen multiplex cinema opened in Central Milton Keynes, the first in Britain (Freedman, 8.11.87.) from an American idea. The opening of this multi-screen cinema, called The Point, caused small local cinemas to close so that it is now the only cinema in the city. Freedman reported, in 1987, that in less than 2 years 2 million people had visited The Point, about 21,000 a week as compared to the 1,000 a week who used to visit the smaller cinema in Bletchley.

In Milton Keynes 30,000 homes have built-in sockets for cable TV and receive several channels through cable at a small yearly charge. For a further monthly subscription they can have access to most satellite channels, also through cable. In any case, without this further subscription, all cable TVs receive Sky One as well as both BBC and some Independent channels. We should remember that satellite channels are not only a common factor to British, including Milton Keynes, viewers but also to Europeans. Roberts (27.4.85.) notes that Sky Channel was then watched by 9 million viewers in Northern Europe and 270,000 in Britain. She considers that Sky projects an 'Anglo-American monoculture'.

The Effects of Centralised Media

Milton Keynes is, then, a city full of strangers, an invented environment relying on rational planning and a place where the major sources of literate and communicative practice are centralised, uniform and rely on models of technology in the market-place. There are, I suggest, four effects of this situation on people's uses and experience of literate activity.

First, everyday language is, on the one hand, heterogeneous with dialects retained within the microcultures of family groups. On the other hand, there is a dominant London dialect which has a hegemonic position in the city. Because this dialect is

not rooted in a long history, when used it begins to sound like an imitation or parody of London dialect in a city which is itself a kind of imitation or parody of what a city should be. In this sense, language use in the city is post-modern. Everyday conversation follows the themes that the city supplies. People are concerned with status, money and the ownership of space.

The rationally planned environment has not managed to get rid of the competitiveness between social groups which comes out in prejudiced language and disparagement of others. This also feeds into school students', language and thus into graffiti. It was epitomised to me by the Irish gypsy family I saw on a bus one day, one of the children saw a black man sitting nearby and remarked: 'Look a golliwog' or by the Asian taxi driver who seemed to be treating me like a colonial master, thanking me for letting him finish his coffee before we drove away and being over grateful for a tip. Was it a part he seemed to think he had to play with white customers?

Thirdly, the relative isolation forced on many residents of Milton Keynes by the lack of extended families, the lack of effective substitute support structures and the monolithic nature of available institutions and their literate resources produces what could be called a privatisation of experience, including literate experience. One is isolated with a public medium over which one has some, if limited , choice. If not isolated as an individual one is isolated within a family unit of some kind, small and uncaring of what neighbours and other strangers do. The lack of cohesive communal experience, participation and limitation of choice results in emotional underdevelopment and the unrestricted demands of the isolated ego. Let us take an example I observed which is concerned with literacy. A man in a City Centre bookshop in 1986 complained that he could not find a particular book on transport. He made a scene about it. He told the shop assistant that if there was anything published about transport he knew about it and he wanted it more quickly. In my notes I wrote:

'It was the bitter isolation and intensity which struck me. He looked pale, ill and odd – tweed hat, wrapped up in a mac., a shopping trolley by his side. Touchy, rather posh put-on voice. The girl answered politely and objectively and listened.'

Literacy here was seen by the customer as part of a nexus of consuming, keeping tabs on the latest information, acquiring, collecting and demonstrating expertise by possessions. To achieve this, the customer felt it necessary to demonstrate an anger and authority unmatched to the occasion or to his listener.

Fourthly, the official market place spawns the black economy. This is perhaps an overdramatic way of saying the residents of Milton Keynes find literate choices beneath or in between official sources of literacy. This ranges from buying books in charity shops such as Oxfam, where I overheard a woman telling the sales assistant that she was here to buy books for her husband because he got through so many while on shift work, to graffiti, pamphleting, passing on pirated videos and self-help associations such as allotment holders with their notices and stalls at local fêtes.

Living in the Media Landscape

We need to think now of the child entering this culture. The messages of the city, of commerce, TV, video coexist with more traditional opinions about literate activity inherited from the previous generation's experiences of literate learning, particularly in school. I have observed a father and three young children expertly naming different makes of car on a bus journey, I have seen a mother amuse her small children by playing a counting game on their fingers in which each finger is named after a character in 'Eastenders'; children have media characters and names on clothes, for instance a Thomas the Tank Engine sweatshirt; they carry plastic bags with names and logos on; in a toy shop small children can expertly identify kinds of Sindy Doll without strictly reading the packet purely from their experience in watching advertisements on television. Shops are part of everyone's experience. People discuss which large store is more friendly. Mass publications are snatched up. W. H. Smith runs out of the 'Radio Times' by Saturday afternoon. Meanwhile parents teach children to read in informal situations such as the doctor's waiting room where I observed a mother reading a book with big pictures to her sick and very little daughter who punctuated the reading with hoarse coughs. The mother read the text and then encouraged the child to comment and question.

In schools the child from the media landscape meets older literate traditions interspersed with newer practices, and a subculture engendered by, among other factors, the institution of school. This is the poignancy of the next generation as it collectively practises and learns this cultural disjunction with literacy as the focus.

3.9. Summary

Literacy cannot be understood without reference to its context, both past and present. This also means, in Milton Keynes, giving attention to the ideologies, the currents of ideas, the social semiotic which are attendant on the belief that it is possible to engineer socially a completely new culture with a literacy and education to match. These symbolic currents are traversed by the lines of power which determine which shaping views will prevail. The implicated participant observer, from his or her relative position, will have to make a collection of the texts surrounding a new town in order to understand it.

The context of situation of a new town, in particular Milton Keynes, is utopian in origin. This means that it is a modernising project, using reason, social planning and capitalist economics to create an environment, which consequently ignores the actual shock effect it may have on the inhabitants. As an historically relative site, it is built up from past ideas of the new, but it cannot gloss over or become a refuge from the tensions of the history which gave it birth: therefore it is reduced to subterfuges of ahistoricism.

Arguably, a new town can be read semiotically as text, particularly because it is continually sending messages about itself. The physical environment too is so planned that it seems to speak itself totally; there is no apparent room for mystery, but only the confusing presence of the inhabitant in an environment which consists of representations of symbols of symbols. A new town is an imposed idea of the balance on nature and culture, of paradise as a city, but as a city committed totally to material growth and prosperity as its raison d'être. Milton Keynes can also be seen as a city of surfaces which seem to hide what is going on beneath.

Cities such as this are both socialist in origin and democratic in intention, social-

ist in their view of the workers' paradise and democratic in their faith that planning will improve material comfort and that people will eventually have a say in the running of the city. New towns share the twentieth century characteristic of migration. Migration entails a loss of place, an alien language and an unseen social behaviour. It is therefore a move from a past to a changed present, into a language dislocated by history and into a society where some codes have to be relearned or reshuffled.

Milton Keynes itself is in a process of privatisation and is the site of a conflict between ideas of the public and the private. It has been partly transformed from the site of a white skilled working-class bid for social advancement to a middle-class city of commuters and business people. As such, it has moved over to high tech and service industries and discourages trade unionism. Its emphasis on consumption as a way of life is shown in the central positioning of the shopping centre. There is much pressure on inhabitants to keep up an image based on consumption.

Education in Milton Keynes is under tight financial control, is being rationalised and centralised, has a growing 'mixed economy' of private and state schools, is increasingly involving private companies as sponsors and in making work-school links, and, lastly, shows increasing evidence of pupil misbehaviour.

The problems of Milton Keynes are that original and incoming inhabitants have split from multi-generation families and are delivered into an environment based on mutual suspicion and competition in patterns of consumption. There is an increasing gap between haves and have-nots with attendant social problems. Yet the attitude of the powerful publicising agencies of the town whitewashes its problems.

Milton Keynes has an American-type relation to the past, one based on shallow knowledge, a nostalgia for lost 'authenticity', on space rather than on time and on a rootless cultural tourism. As such, living here feels like living in a fiction or myth. The areas of freedom for the inhabitants might in some cases be the ability to live on the margins of the mainstream culture, where the possibility lies in taking part in patterns of mutuality of diverse origin. Within this context, the school carries out its process of reproduction and change, particularly in schooled literacy. History,

aspiration and the coming generation are brought together into a vision of utopia, but a utopia where myths still operate, thus Graff's third generation view is necessary (Graff, 1987).

3.10. Development of the Hypothesis

The following aspects of context now seem to be significant: utopianism, modernisation, relation to migrations, relation to history and language, the public/private dichotomy, class, industry, consumerism, education, social problems and the power relations which traverse these themes. How these themes have been dealt with by third generation theorists will reveal what else is necessary for a hypothetical model of literacy in Milton Keynes. I look first at Brice Heath's 'Ways with Words', the last major statement within the ethnography of literacy and then consider Street's extension of his earlier ideas on context.

Ways with Words

Brice Heath's achievement in 'Ways with Words' has been to demonstrate effectively that literacy is part of the role language plays in socialising children into community cultures, cultures which give children differing life-chances, especially when entering mass education. In different contexts, caregiving, space, time, age, sex-segregation and the interdependence of oral and written language are all culturally relative.

Brice Heath's intervention as ethnographer revealed that:

'Children and teachers across cultural groups, if provided adequate information in suitable forms, could learn to articulate relations between cultural patterns of talking and knowing, and, understanding such relations, to make choices' (1983 p. 13)

There seems to be a problem here. Scollon and Scollon (1981) have argued that a change of world-view, of ways with words, is a threat to identity. How much of a threat is it to identity to articulate in new ways?

Brice Heath's achievement is undeniable. She invested ten years of her life as an unfunded researcher, working with and accepted by the communities. Her reading was vast and her project historically unique as communities and educators are now gone. With Rosen (1985) though, I feel it is possible to pick out certain areas of incompleteness in Heath's presentation. First, as Rosen has pointed out, Heath refuses to set language differences against socio-economic (class) differences, or against racial differences. She claims that communicative patterns in the two communities shifted among varieties as the occasion demanded. Therefore, her emphasis on school and work as goals supports to some extent uncritically the mainstream culture by showing how its goals become those of marginalised groups. While pointing out how language, with literacy as part, can be used as a 'source of power for access to and maintenance of expanded types and places of work' (p. 363). She skates over the fact that the problems the working-class communities have with language use might arise, as Rosen suggests, from a dependence on the limited access to powerful forms given by capitalism. The fact that language can be powerful is implied only by the limitations of the ways with words of the millworkers, limitations imposed by the concrete situation of their job. The missing element here is a further statement that ways with words could be used critically to understand and change the system that gives life-chances and not simply to find ways to get on at home, school and work.

The idea of choice, 'opportunities, values, motivations and resources available for communications' (p. 617), comes uncomfortably close, for a British reader, to the discourse of Conservative political catchwords. This is a naive idea unless Heath is deliberately saying that the carefully sketched economic situations of Roadville and Trackton have no effect on language, that present culture is not economically based.

Although fully acknowledging the work of history, which has determined the cultures of Roadville, Trackton and Gateway, and agreeing that economic and material forces have provided their legacy of ideas and actions as well as those of teachers, Heath does not emphasise this structuring in the now of the narrative

which becomes instead a 'natural (sic) flow of community and classroom life' (p. 7).

Heath does admit that the apartness of black and white is a result of social and economic factors. and that the result is a difference in techniques for adjusting, but she fails to state explicitly the inequalities which lurk at the centre of these people's situations:

'... any reader who tries to explain the community contrasts in this book on the basis of race will miss the central point of the forces on culture as learned behaviour and on language habits as part of that shared learning' (p. 11).

I would suggest that by apparently taking the 'home-made models' of her subjects as enough justification to accept their aims of getting on at school and work as 'natural', Heath has ignored a vital aspect of literacy: political reflexivity. Hence. she is not then able to accept that race or class awareness or codes may be the bases of Trackton and Roadville cultures, developed in a struggle with the mainstream, dominant middle-class cultures. In other words the mainstream culture has disadvantaged non-mainstream groups (Gee, 1988).

Rosen summarises this better than I can:

'In the end, teachers can defend successfully the enclaves they have constructed only if they have won the parents and community to their methods and can invoke their support in sustaining them. And those are "ways with words" which have to be learned too. They constitute the language of political participation. If all of us do not learn this way with words, we shall go on placing wreaths on the tombstones of projects all over the world, overcome with sadness and impotence.' (1985, p. 456)

How then do we change the idea or context to include the dimensions of participation and struggle? The direction is given by Brian Street.

Street's Development of Context

In a draft conference paper (1986), Brian Street explains his own view of why literacy should be seen in a cultural context and extends the idea of content in his 1984 work.

He answers claims that he has unnecessarily polarised literacy with his distinction between the autonomous and the ideological models by arguing that the ideological model itself subsumes the autonomous model. It is the autonomous model which polarises because it separates out the 'technical' features of literacy and adds the 'cultural bits' later, making a false polarity between the technical and the cultural. The autonomous model was itself ideological because it disguised power structures. 'Ideology', Street remarks, is used specifically in the sense employed by Bourdieu and CCCS among others: 'the site of tension between authority and power on the one hand and individual resistance and creativity on the other'.

The ideological model can also be located in recent linguistics within discourse analysis, which, Street suggests, could be fruitfully linked to ethnographic approaches within anthropology and the two combined could offer a synthetic approach to the study of orality and literacy. Thus he is extending Heath's term 'literacy events' which meant, in her work, '... any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes'. This could now be extended to 'both behaviour and conceptualisations related to the use of reading and/or writing'. 'Literacy practices incorporate not only literacy events as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral but also 'folk-models' of those events and the ideological preconceptions which underpin them. In Grillo's work for example, Street notes, literacy is located as only one kind of communicative practice within the larger setting of social, economic, political and cultural processes.

Street criticises Anglo-American linguists for excluding context from semantics or reducing it simply to observable personal interaction. Malinowski's 'context of situation' is also too narrow and Levinson in 'Pragmatics' excludes wider aspects of context because they belong to a broader European tradition.

The wider aspects of context for which Street is arguing can be found, he writes, in social anthropology, where kinship organisation, conceptual systems, political structures, habitat and economy are seen as systems rather than interactions. Recent anthropologists have also used discourse and power to look at utterances in context. Discourse Street defines as:

'... the complex of conceptions, classifications and language use that characterise a specific sub-set of an ideological formation'. (p. 4)

This can have some relation to Foucault's *epistemes* or to a narrower anthropological reference to the subculture of the group under ethnographic investigation, but it is broader than the use in linguistics.

The kind of approach to literacy studies favoured by Street would then, he says, be Heath's. Heath, he writes, shows up the myth of written language as conveying meaning through the words on the page while oral language's meaning is swamped by social pressures of status, power etc. as in Olson, Ong and Goody.

Heath, he writes, shows written language used in face to face communication: people opening letters together and discussing their replies collaboratively is also part of a larger context, the culture and ideology of the participants and their range of other literacy events and practices. Power here is a crucial element because official letters represent power over the participants and a response may represent local autonomy. Thus the 'words on the page' depend on the power context. Literacy events are part of a larger literacy practice that includes local/state relations and broad ideological assumptions about the power of the written word: a practice which cannot be empirically observed and which autonomous linguists would never find if they took language and literacy out of context. Thus the 'great divide' is itself part of the cultural assumptions of linguists.

I would summarise the next steps in a third generation model then as lying in the fact that cultural history teaches us that we need to know the place of literacy as a use and theory of language among the other constituents of the symbolic worlds

of cultural groups, for example their ways of experiencing and judging reality, their attitudes to life, and death their social distinctions and boundaries, their classification of time and space, their divisions of public and private, their views of the family, their irrational eruptions – times of violence, disorder and play – and the power relations, micro and macro which govern their interactions. As well as looking at ideologies then and the way people act within them, we also need to look, as we saw with Brice Heath, at the way cultures include a political dimension, at the way participants are affected by power relations, for example of race, class and gender, and at the way people use literacy within these relations. Can literacy be said to have in some sense a political role?

Shortcomings of the Account So Far

A contemporary account of the environment and provision for literacy in Milton Keynes still cannot ascertain whether literacy, particularly schooled literacy makes a difference to the school pupils of the Milton Keynes area, nor whether it has its desired effect. We now know who the learners of Milton Keynes are, what their problems may be as residents of the city. We know that new town planners also have a history and that Milton Keynes is a result of social engineering, using ideas which came from elsewhere. To do justice to a cultural description of the residents of Milton Keynes, we would need to be global in our description of every aspect of their lives, but our concern is more narrowly with children in a secondary school who will soon emerge on to a job market which is depleted of young workers. Pupils with inadequate literacy to tackle such jobs show that not they but society has fallen at the very first hurdle in its attempt to create the literate workers of the next generation. History leaves us with the question, what else do we need to look for to explain this failure?

We still do not know what cultures have been formed by the literacy learners of Milton Keynes, and we do not know where literacy as an aspect of language use fits in to these cultures. Neither do we know why so many pupils in Milton Keynes reject schooled literacy. How, in an environment designed to unite the best of past

and future, can literacy fail? The answer is in an investigation of what literacy is taken to be, of how it fits into constructions of culture and power and of what language as a part of culture is.

In Chapter Four I will thus look at an example of the problem of literacy in Milton Keynes that we need to explain. I will then look closely at cultural ('outer') and psychological ('inner') analyses in order to derive a relevant hypothesis for a model of literacy learners in my school. First however, I will sum up what I have argued so far as a refined hypothesis for a model of literacy in MK School.

3.11. Refined Hypothesis

The task I set myself at the beginning of this thesis was to refine a hypothesis for a theory of literacy which would fully explain the range of uses of literacy in the context of a new town school and the reasons why some of these literacies were used as tactics of subversions and resistance.

In my first three chapters I have moved from the history of my literacy to the history of literacy in Milton Keynes and district and to the contemporary cultural context of Milton Keynes. The hypothesis which I have evolved in these chapters can now be set out as follows.

The observer's history of literacy cannot be omitted from an account of the history of the observed because both use literacy in ways whose similarities and differences relate to their positions in history and culture. Therefore literacy cannot be defined apart from such relativism. There is no objective or autonomous view of literacy. I therefore propose that, following Graff and Street, an autonomous view of literacy cannot account for either schooled literacy or any version of literacy in Milton Keynes.

I hypothesise therefore from my own case that literacy has certain particular uses related to my own history as an individual. It would have similar or different uses for other individuals. But my literacy was also in use within the contexts of religion and schooling where powerful forms were intended to be transmitted and uncritically received. The alternative connection between literacy and the world

and my ability to inject that inner world through literacy back into the world in order to influence it shows that literacy can serve purposes which relate to existential questions, both in the discovery of ideas in reading and in the exposure of ideas in writing. Such purposes are: the search for personal authenticity, the integration of present and past and the personal becoming the political.

In an educational context, I argue that literacy can best be justified as a part of learning in school if it is part of a way of knowing, a placing in experience, a contribution to a world view on the part of the learner. It cannot aid learning if it is viewed in isolation or as a technical exercise.

I argued that pupils, especially in a new town, are exposed from an early age to new technologies and their literacies. Yet in school they are exposed to traditional literacies which define success in schooled terms and knowledge as schooled knowledge and which define literacy as schooled literacy. They have to learn to behave in certain ways in language, and this at a crisis time in their identities, in order to become successful in the school's terms, largely by public examination. The subversive uses of literacy, for example graffiti, show that pupils have learned to do things with their literacy in opposition to the school. I related these conclusions to Graff's overview of historical conceptions of literacy.

In order to describe the literacy of myself and my pupils in this context, I followed Graff in rejecting historical context as either determinist or having narrative shape. Instead I accepted Graff's characterisation of a third way to view literacy historically. This view involved seeing the history of the uses of literacy as itself offering a way of understanding what literacy may be. Such a view would look at human choices in their restrictions and well as their potential for liberation.

I accepted this view as a way to look at the history of literacy within the recent tradition of inquiry of Graff's 'third generation' of literacy theorists. Such a historical view of literacy would ground it sharply in context in localities and would extend the idea of context into that area known as culture, that is use the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and psychology to look critically at definitions of literacy and the interaction between readers and texts.

In the context of Milton Keynes, my hypothesis was that a study of literacy there would need a context in the form of a history of literacy and education in the area, a cultural inquiry to discover the conceptualisations of literacy in this context, a sociological enquiry which would look at the cultural patterns which were handed on to the individual in the name of literacy and a psychological inquiry to look at the relationship between reader and text. It would then need an educational inquiry in order to focus the question raised by this discussion on to the social practices of schooling in Milton Keynes.

In writing a history of literacy and education in Milton Keynes and district in order to sharpen the content for a study of literacy in MK School, I also set out to test the limits of social history in its ability to describe literacy in context. A social history reveals that literacy is situated both within broad historical forces and within a locality with specific local history within which is a history of literacy in education. It further reveals the suppression of the uses of literacy of a large section of the population, working people, and the predominance of powerful definitions of literacy, operating largely through schooling, which effect this suppression.

Having looked at the recent history of Milton Keynes and district I concluded that it too was contingent on certain ethical and social conditions. It was not possible to deduce an autonomous view of history which would somehow fix literacy, or for that matter education, within an abstract and permanent definition.

My hypothesis from my application of social history was that literacy could be looked at historically taking into account four major kinds of conditions. First, major social changes in employment patterns, transport, migration, domestic arrangements, social custom and mass culture which affected the different recognised rites of passage or stages of an individual life. Literacy would not be in any fixed relation to any of these changes but might have any role from none at all to a major element, both social and personal.

My second kind of condition involved the role of powerful social groups which control the material conditions of the less powerful. Within these conditions literacy will again have no universal role because it will depend on time use and its

restrictions, spatial use and restrictions and access to texts. Those who in any way control the distribution of texts, libraries, schools, publishers and churches may create powerful definitions of literacy, with conditions of access.

In the case of school, these are related to a pedagogy, itself with a history of the use and definition of literacy. Access may depend an the acceptance of a role offered by the institution.

If, then, what counts as literacy is controlled by those who dominate networks of social institutions, for example schools, the social change becomes a threat. A new town is a major disjunction because it works partially at least on the premiss that old structures will continue or arise again reconfirmed if they are simply allotted space, 'designed in'. However, the population comes into a place where the old élites have been partially disrupted by the building of the new town. They bring literacies with them, they meet literacies both new and old in the new town within a weakened hegemony, a hegemony which is also tempered by the growing demands of the market, of industry and commerce. The complexity of this is what is usually disregarded by those who persist in seeing literacy as a straightforward matter of children learning to read and write. This complexity is social and not pedagogic. Literacies must therefore be described rather than defined.

My third condition was the operation of dominant national culture at a particular time. It may involve a philosophy of language, a definition of the division of labour, of gender, of national culture and of morality with regard to texts. These literacies operate through powerful agencies such as the school.

The result of the first three conditions was, a lower-class culture. Again within particular limits of time and space, the members of such a culture will partly accept and partly subvert or expropriate ruling-class literacy. Again there is no fixed role for literacy within such groups. It may have a greater or lesser role in relation to oracy, occupational cultures, alternative means of education and tactics of resistance. Literacies may be ambivalent, turned on the one hand towards authority and on the other away from it, both same and different.

Citing Brian Street, another third generation theorist, and his work in Iran, my

hypothesis was that literacy needs to be described using not only a social history but, by extension, a cultural history. That is by the study of the world-views of participants in a culture which are the mid-points between determination by major social changes, powerful social groups and a dominant national culture and the uses and expropriation of literacy for people's own uses. What statistical and objective accounts of literacy in context cannot encompass is precisely the role of literacy in these ideologies, just as in my own case I argued that literacy was for me only of any meaning when it was used to place something in world-view.

Looking at Milton Keynes now as a cultural context I had to consider both its historical genesis and the patterns and traditions which contributed to the complex ideologies of its inhabitants and the interaction of those inhabitants with their new city. It was necessary to be more specific about Milton Keynes as a particular situation and to place literacy in this cultural context where it forms part of specific practices within these ideologies, the frameworks and constellations of meaning and their tensions which are current in Milton Keynes. The study of literacy then had to move from history to culture.

My hypotheses were about Milton Keynes as a specific site of literacy concern, the way certain currents of thought became embodied in this new town. I suggested that these patterns can be literally read off from the experience of living in this city by the participant observer as a form of social semiotic. The patterns embodied in Milton Keynes as a context for literacy were, I suggested, utopianism, modernity, newness and subterfuge of the ahistorical. A new town that is made up and rationally planned from bits of the past becomes a place of ever retreating mirror images of symbols such that the environment becomes all surface which appears to speak itself absolutely. But on the other hand the workings of power are concealed beneath the glossy surfaces. It is in this dislocation, this mixing of codes and concealment of power that pupils in Milton Keynes learn to be literate.

I further suggested that there was in Milton Keynes an emphasis on a move from public to private and on consumption as a way of life and as a measure of status. Hence Milton Keynes is a site of supposed modernity but it is also a site

where older myths still operate because they are imported as cultural codes to ensure standards and respectability. This is true of traditional schooled literacy as seen in Milton Keynes.

In looking at third generation literacy theorists to find cultural models of literacy which would match the context of Milton Keynes, I concluded from the work of Brice Heath that it would be possible discover and study difference within literacy contexts which are not in any way exotic or foreign but which exist within majority cultures. I could therefore treat the pupils of MK School as in some sense 'Others' whose differences and similarities within mainstream and powerful social codes could be studied. I would be able to consider, within a cultural model of literacy, the limitations imposed on language use by socio-economic position and the relation of language and therefore literacy to pupils' lives. This would enable me to consider relative social power and the role of literacy in actual or potential change. It is in this area between power and individual resistance or creativity that Street places the site for the third generation of studies of literacy. Street suggests that the way forward is to link discourse analysis to anthropology, which would lead to studies of reading, writing and the political and ideological aspects of readers within their culture. Literacy events could then be seen within the entire range of such events experienced by a cultural group, taking into account power relations and relations with local and national cultural patterns. A pilot study of this kind of inquiry now follows.

Chapter Four: Making a Theory of Literacy

4.1. A Pilot Study: Graffiti

In order to find clues to the kind of cultural explanation necessary to explain the literacy of secondary school students in Milton Keynes, I will summarise and refer to a pilot study of graffiti in MK School which I carried out and published and which I submit with this thesis (Hodges, 1988). My purpose was to analyse an informal literacy which existed alongside dominant formal literacies in school and in Milton Keynes. My argument began thus: here is a new town, yet people write all over it. We must suppose that they really want to write in this way and in these places and that they think that others may want to read these texts. A tolerable assumption is that the writers are mainly young, that they may be updating a form with a history and that they are assuming readers and other writers. The town is therefore important as the context of this writing.

I collected a corpus of graffiti from the desks in what was then my classroom in MK School. I first divided them by subject into ten categories in order of frequency: love and sex, pop music and pop culture, assertions of presence, greetings, swear-words and insults, comments on school and school subjects, identity and pseudonyms, politics, threats to assault and a final section of the unclassifiable. I suggested that these categories displayed tensions within students and within the school, for example, the intense effort of learning to be literate is channelled into a medium which subverts the institution which is assumed to teach that literacy. I then looked at the appearance of graffiti and concluded that their actual form was intimately connected with the time, place and politics of their writing. I next looked at the origins in other codes of the references made in graffiti and found that these were in areas of popular culture and taboo discourses. I suggested that the content of some graffiti was then a kind of cultural tactics against dominant school discourses.

I concluded that graffiti can be viewed as a knowing, literate and writerly response to the distribution of power in a school, to the hegemony of knowledge and to the definition of what is valid and moral in discourse. As such, they form a

code with its own conventions and are a   mediated view of student experience. They are necessarily part of a specific time, place and cultural politics because the writers have to steal back time and space to write them and have to devise means to do so. School responds by erasing or ignoring graffiti but, I argue, they represent an attempt to find ways with words to integrate what school alienates.

As a response to a hegemonic range of literate forms, graffiti parallel and parody those forms as well as demonstrating that student subculture itself exists in an ambiguous relationship with the dominant school culture, in that they echo some of the ways in which school classifies students, for example the competitiveness among some graffiti writers to see who can demonstrate more knowledge of popular culture. But graffiti also, I argue, enable the writers to juggle with dangerous powers such as sexuality. The public display of such material becomes part of a cultural tactics of risk, dare and taboo because the writers may be caught by teachers. Graffiti are thus a form of deep play. They are *dialogic* in that they assume a culture of other equal readers and writers who may take the risk to enter the game and respond in opposition to the school's monologic discourses. Graffiti share the other characteristic of Bakhtin's dialogic discourses in that they are also part of a carnivalesque overturning of the status quo (Bakhtin, 1988).

My study of graffiti gave me starting points for making a theory of literacy in culture in particular in MK School. My concern is to find a way to describe and analyse the cultural framework of the range of literacies used by the pupils of MK School, a description and analysis to which my reading will contribute when no single model already exists. The starting points for such a description and analysis based on my pilot study are as follows.

The whole range of contemporary literacies in institutional contexts such as the school must include alternative literacies. The practitioners of alternative literacies are those who must pass through the institution, in this case the pupils. My hypotheses are, first that alternative literacies are public comments by people without power; secondly, that the topics considered in alternative literacies are those which the institution and its formal literacies ignores, expunges or forbids,

such as sexuality and aggression; thirdly, that the physical appearance of alternative writing, where it is, what it is written on, what it is written with and who erases it are all significant parts of a study of alternative literacies because they tell us how such literacies are integral parts of relations of power.

Alternative literacies seem to me to be written and read by pupils with a passion not reserved for formal literacies. For example, a pupil will spend time in class 'graffiti-ing' a bag or pencil case rather than doing set work. This reading and writing is powerful because it literally provides an alternative to official literacies. It treats those topics which have a passionate interest for pupils and it is used against the deliverers of official topics, the teachers.

Entry to the game of alternative literacy seems to be a risk in both an 'inner' and an 'outer' way. In the 'inner' sense, alternative literacies such as graffiti deal with taboo subjects which can be deeply amoral and unpleasant. In an 'outer' sense, the pupil risks his or her own status in the pupil culture because he or she may come off worse in the game. For example, a pupil may begin a dialogue on a desk top with an unknown correspondent and find that this correspondent is insulting him or her publicly for others to read. At the same time the risk can be liberating because the writer can be anonymous and be free to play with language and identity and overturn and parody official literacies and conceptions of the 'child' or 'pupil'.

4.2. Rethinking the Pilot Study

Having considered and discussed my pilot study with different people and having thought about it in relation to my later experiences with theory and with data collection, I now see that it is in some ways imperfect as a starting point. I now isolate *three* areas which I will need to make prominent part of the following chapters:

1. The article required a stronger theoretical framework. The references to theorists appear to be to eclectic because I had not brought out sufficiently the interlocking parts of the theory I was building. In this chapter I will then need to make sure that my argument has a strong structure and that the theorists support it but do not supplant it.

2. I believe that I was too keen to emphasise the *differences* between alternative literacies in Milton Keynes and in other places. What I have since realised is that graffiti and schooling are continuities as well as differences. Common experiences in the past and present will produce common languages, such as graffiti, still open to change but with many characteristics staying the same in different contexts. Graffiti are part of a conservatism which frames pupil subcultures. The politics of graffiti are thus less local than I imagined. In schools they are being used as a political statement everywhere where pupils are ranked according to literacy or 'illiteracy', success or failure. To an extent then, I overemphasised graffiti as a code which was only obliquely related to its content and I underemphasised their role as a code which is grounded in the experiences of pupil subcultures. This is still not to say that graffiti 'reflect' subcultures. The code is still interposed between pupils and teachers and other 'outsiders'.

3. In terms of a more grounded and empirical approach, it would have been better to discuss the graffiti with the pupils themselves rather than to rely on my own point of view and analysis. I would then have been able to triangulate my ideas with theirs. I could also have looked at similarities and differences between my data and other 'non-reactive' data such as rough books, toilet walls and sites outside the school. This would have strengthened my discussion of the ownership of the graffiti, indeed I could have tried to find out exactly who wrote it. As it was, I think I overemphasised the disjunctive background of the writers, forgetting that many would have been born into the cultural continuities of a town like Wolverton. As a footnote, I mistakenly wrote that Milton Keynes proliferates with signs. In fact it does not. There is a low level of public advertising in the town and there are a lot of blank spaces which invite writing.

4.3. Making a Theory of Literacy

So far, I have drawn on evidence and analyses from the following sites: my personal history, the history of the area, the development and contemporary situation of Milton Keynes and the spontaneous literate texts of graffiti. I now turn to education, the one site I have not considered theoretically. In education, we find the institutions and operations which are formally regarded as learning to be literate. In schools, children learn to be literate in the social context of the literacies they are formally expected to learn.

I now look at education in some depth in three areas: literacy theory, cultural theory and psychological theory. I base my study of education in these areas because I need to know what part literacy now plays in people's ways of life and how it is learned. This enables me to understand, describe and account for the range of literacies which I have identified in MK School and to say what they are good for. The three academic enterprises which I have mentioned above as sources of evidence for my survey support my argument in the following ways. Literacy studies examine models of literacy; cultural theory enables me to determine where literacy sits in the social structures which underlie the shared contexts of people's lives in school; psychological theory lets me look at the individual literacy learner on the level of readers and texts. All three areas throw light on if, and perhaps why, pupils may need to practise alternatives to official literacies.

In my survey, I establish a stronger critical framework which was lacking from my pilot study. I triangulate my conclusions with the grounded empirical enquiry which was partly lacking from my pilot study in order to test the adequacy of my conclusions and their usefulness for describing and explaining what happens in MK School.

4.4. An Inquiry into Literacy

In this section, I survey and analyse conceptions of literacy derived from 'ideological' theories. Ideological or 'New Literacy' studies are exemplified by the work of Street, Pattison, Levine and Graff and have their common background in

sociolinguistics, ethnography, Marxism and structuralism. 'Ideologial' is the term used by Street to distinguish this group of theorists from those he calls autonomous (Street, 1984, 1993). An autonomous model of literacy, Street argues, assumes that literacy is constant, knowable, objective, measurable and has consequences. An ideological definition assumes that literacies are cultural, constructed, knowable only with reference to the situation in which they are used and related to status and power. Street argues that the autonomous model is itself already ideological in that it disguises its ideological status by claiming neutrality. Autonomous literacy is in fact a dominant ideology and is engaged in power relations and contests for meaning with less dominant practices (Street, 1993). It is this conflict which I will analyse by showing how the study of literacy in school and in pupil cultures in Milton Keynes reveals how the reproduction of literate forms under the guise of newness produces conflicts which undermine official education. This will lead me to conclude that the ideological position needs to be extended into an even fuller theory of literacy in culture.

Assuming that a strong theory of literacy will be an ideological one (Pattison, 1982; Street, 1984; Levine, 1986; Graff, 1987), I adopt Graff's term of 'literacy myth' to expose recurring beliefs about literacy in relation to school where the dominant model is still the autonomous one.

Myths are a kind of traditional mental shorthand based on a simple logic which covers more complex truths and which forms a closed language. Mythical simplifications are versions of authoritative discourses which have had power over a long period of time and are counted as 'common knowledge' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). They stem from those who have dominant definitions of key areas of discourse and the power to broadcast these definitions. Since such key areas are controversial, for example, in struggles over the definition of the term 'English' in education, myths provide instant justifications for action, or indeed inaction, and divert attention from the real foundations of conflicts. People like reasons for what they think of as not their fault, for example in certain areas of children's literacy learning where medical metaphors such as 'remedial reading' prevail. In practice,

literacy myths are used to support each other and are not easily separable from the mythical 'ecology' to which they belong. There will therefore be some overlapping in my descriptions, for example, the myth of literacy as the ability to read the best literature supports the myth that such literacy will ensure the continued progress of civilisation. Some myths can be rejected outright. Others need redescription.

An Economic and Political Myth

The first literacy myth can be summarised as follows:

1. Literacy is the prime cause of personal economic success or failure and of national economic success or failure.
2. Schools should teach 'basic' or 'functional' literacy which enables economic success. Otherwise, schools are responsible for economic failure.

I will now look closely at these aspects of the first myth and at the counterarguments to them.

1. The most persistent myth in British schooling is that learning to read and write will get you a 'good job'. In certain situations, this is absolutely the case. Professional skills dependent on written language and book learning over an extended period of time have demanding traditions for entrants. Therefore, in individual cases, it is difficult to deny this. However, when we consider the education of *all* children, the problem changes. In a literate society, to be literate is to belong. The Industrial Revolution was a turning point. The struggles of the nineteenth century included a struggle for literacy. However, throughout the course of mass education, bureaucrats have tried to give more and more accurate definitions of literacy in order to prescribe knowledge and technical skills which could be measured (Cook-Gumperz, 1985). Success at school has meant passing tests and examinations whose aim is to measure such skills and knowledge. The link between success in exams and job opportunities has made a mastery of certain schooled literacy

practices a 'common sense' criterion of literacy or illiteracy, belonging or not belonging. Educational institutions are accepted as the sole guarantors of absolute standards of literate success and as the definers of the only successful uses to which reading and writing can be put. The myth is easy to believe because of its oversimplicity and its appeal to 'observable' results as what counts as evidence.

The counterargument is as follows:

a) Schooled literacy represents only a limited number of practices which, for children, can lag behind the 'increasingly complex literacies that their work, leisure, lives as citizens and even their survival will demand of them.' (Dombey, 1992 p. 5).

b) Test or exam success represents success in the codes of schooled literacy and does not give a picture of the complete range of pupil competences which they may be using outside the school or without the knowledge of their teachers (Dombey, op. cit.).

c) Success in schooled literacy is associated with moral virtue.

d) Cultural or class background may be powerful factors in life opportunities or literate success. On the other hand, successful literates may not be able to get past barriers which are class rather than literate ones (Gee, 1988).

2. Graff's first generation of writers on literacy has portrayed literacy levels, especially in the case of particular 'thresholds' of mass literacy, as prime causes of national economic success (Graff, 1987). 'Declining' literacy standards thus denote national decline and failures in 'basic' or 'functional' literacy teaching are ascribed to schools. There may indeed be cases where literacy goes hand in hand with productivity, but the connection is not inevitable. It is possible, for example, to correlate *illiteracy* and wealth as in Pattison's example of Saudi Arabia in 1988, where 6 out of 10 people were illiterate but the GNP was 8,000 dollars per capitum. The

deliberate instigation of literacy programmes could, on the other hand, have effects other than increased profits. Pattison suggests that the Shah of Iran's literacy programmes helped cause the Islamic revolution which overthrew him (Pattison, 1982). It is also arguable that increased productivity, for example in the Industrial Revolution, may have caused illiteracy, as well as the loss of social mobility, alienation, alcoholism and suicide.

Schools are expected to teach pupils 'basic' or 'functional' literacy but definitions keep changing as technology and the search for profits change (McLaren, 1988). There is no evidence that knowledge about language will induce better use of it or that, because school provides a structure to language learning, language outside school has no structure or rules. In any case, even linguists do not agree on one model of language or literacy (Kirkman, 1.5.87.; Allen and Widdowson, 1988). 'Literacy' is misconstrued as the knowledge to succeed in 'developed' industrial society (McLaren, 1988). In fact, 'functional' literacy may be functional only to those who wish to preserve the economic, political or cultural status quo and not for the disadvantaged adult illiterate.

An Historical and Cultural Myth

The second myth is that 'literacy levels' should make a straight and measurable ascent over time and thus can be used as 'standards'. Signs of growing illiteracy represent a major social crisis and are the fault of schools.

Over the last decade, most traditionally literate Western societies have confronted themselves with the horror of literacy in crisis, for example Bloom and Hirsch in America and the DFE in England. In Britain, since World War II, the results of reading tests have indicated a general increase in the levels of mass literacy, yet: 'Every fifteen years or so, dire pronouncements about falling standards have rumbled around the country' (Dombey, 1992 p. 3). Recent examples would be the 1969 Black papers, James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech of 1976, Prince Charles' attack on English teaching in 1989 and Kenneth Baker's speeches of 1986–88, which culminated in the Education Reform Act and the National

Curriculum. A myth of crisis in England became a false debate about method, for example in Martin Turner's pronouncements, when what is actually at stake is the relation between literacy and social practices. All current assessments are derived from illiteracy. A constant percentage of the population seems to 'fall behind' and crises are declared because people are constantly expected to be doing better. The myth then is about 'standards' of literacy. The proposed solutions are frequently either the restoration of older methodologies or emergency measures such as 'reading recovery'. I suggest that there are four factors which, together, constitute the real foundations of the debate about literacy.

First, the constant search for statistical proof of decline can be read as a metaphor for the health of Western society and as a barometer of the social climate (Cook-Gumperz, 1985). The deeper fears hidden by supposed statistical decline are the diminution of the workforce in the 1990s, the so-called 'skills-gap' or 'demographic time bomb' and the consequently greater and more powerful role available to women and ethnic minorities; hence the interest in their literacy (Gee, 1988; McLaren, 1988).

Secondly, expectations of what we should be able to read and write have changed. There are alphabetic, visual, spatial, artistic, graphical, technological and mechanical literacies which mean that we are all illiterate in something. It is not even certain that there exists a bastion of the truly literate against which we are constantly measured. As Martin Amis remarks: '... any publisher's reader will tell you that most of our leading writers are afflicted by near dyslexia.' (Amis, 27.1.85.). The saturation of information and the demands of new literacies mean that statistics cannot tell us how literacies are used, what personal demands they satisfy and how they change individual or social roles (Levine, 1986; Graff, 1987).

Thirdly, the idea of crisis in literacy presupposes that literacy makes a straight and measurable ascent on the model of Hegelian progress or on the model of the evolution of civilisation or of industrial society. The alternative explanation is that, before mass schooling, there was a popular literacy already existing which has now lagged behind the expectations generated by mass schooling. In this sense, Graff

speaks not of a smooth ascent but of continuities and discontinuities in the history of literacy (1987). Dombey (1992) shows that a decline in literate abilities noted among seven to eight year olds in Buckinghamshire between 1980 and 1992 is attributable to more children coming to school less well-equipped to learn to read because of an increase in poverty, something outside teachers' control.

If, historically, literacy has been the concern of the few, of those involved in property and conquest, then it is their influence rather than that of the many which affects economic development (Hoyles, 1977; Graff, 1987). Thus basic or functional literacy alone will neither increase job chances nor cure unemployment. There is no causal link between literacy and personal success unless literacy is seen in the light of Street's paralinguistic features of status and power (Street, 1986). Those who have literacy do not necessarily use it but may be no less functional or productive. Rather, literacy is tied to social origin, ethnicity, race, gender and age in that it reinforces prior divisions in society, giving social mobility to the privileged (Graff, 1987). If literacy is socially constructed and depends on the priorities of a particular culture, if it is '... not acquired [but] is constructed by the literate' (Meek, 20.3.87.), then it is not economic development which is directly linked to it but power, and the politics of cultural attitudes to language itself (Pattison, 1982).

A Political Myth

The prevalent political myth is that literacy inevitably leads to certain political positions, for example to democracy (e.g. Oxenham, 1980) or to left-wing radicalism (as in Malcom X's work, discussed in Pattison, 1982). There is in fact no reason why literacy should lead to any one political position. It can serve fascism equally well, or communism, Buddhism or Confucianism. In fact there have been highly sophisticated peoples, such as the Incas, with no alphabetic literacy. If your particular culture depends on an underclass, as in Ancient Greece or some Western democracies, the common fund of knowledge, culture and administration is only a common fund for those with power to use it and change it. The ideological theorist Bennett (1986), contrasts Oxenham's autonomous view that 'attainments in litera-

cy are associated with dispositions favourable to planned change in society ' (Oxenham, 1980) with Lévi-Strauss's view that 'the primary function of writing as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings'.

Theories which link literacy and radical socialism cannot guarantee cause and effect between reading and writing and left-wing politics. Radicalism, in fact, requires a predisposition to doubt. Literacy can work for anti-revolutionary as well as revolutionary purposes. Its uses may be politically illuminating, but it is not a thing-in-itself. As Pattison remarks of the 'prisoner phenomenon', the fact that those in jail often become politically illuminated, not all prisoners do this: the militantly intelligent read because they are militantly intelligent, although I would want to qualify this by saying that they become more militantly intelligent in dialogue with *texts* (Pattison, op. cit.).

In fact, it could be argued that literacies are more likely to lead to conservative political views. The powerful force of schooled literacy is used, according to Gee, to 'solidify the social hierarchy, empower élites, and ensure that people lower in the hierarchy accept the norms , values and beliefs of élites' (Gee, 1988). Schooled literacy is therefore more useful for hegemony than for domination or coercion. Gee continues: '... an old contrast in society between literate élites and the nonliterate masses has become a highly stratified social ranking based not on literacy per se, but on the degree to which one controls a certain type of school-based literacy (in speech and behaviour, as well as in writing) associated with the values and aspirations of the middle classes' (1988, p. 206). He concludes; '... nothing follows from literacy and schooling. Much follows, however, from what comes with literacy and schooling.' Hence, a text is a 'loaded weapon'.

An Anthropological Myth

This myth is that literacy leads to civilisation in a culture and to rationality and objectivity in an individual. Thus to be illiterate means that cultures are uncivilised and individuals are context-bound, irrational and stupid. The emphases on cultures and individuals belong together here because, in a brief historical period, illiteracy

has become the signifier of social failure, physical slowness, innate stupidity and an indicator of a pre-civilised state. As Levine has shown in his work on the social context of literacy, social science theorists such as Talcott Parsons and writers on literacy such as Havelock, McLuhan, Goody and Watt have produced models of human history in which writing marks the transition from primitive to modern. Levine suggests that this argument rests on the bracketing off of context in order to isolate one phenomenon, literacy, which has made literacy seem ideal and autonomous. It could be argued that anthropologists in the European tradition have contributed to this by their emphasis on the 'savage' becoming civilised. Literate Europeans have been seen as superior to the other (Levine, 1986). Literacy, taken out of context, has become, as Street has shown, 'objective', 'neutral', a 'tool' or a 'technology', reflecting the assumptions of the culture which defined it (Street, 1984). As a tool or technology, literacy became connected, in Oxenham's autonomous usage, with rational thinking; Oxenham claims that we use reason to deduct meaning from a text by working out words to see the structure and mechanics of language, allowing the human intelligence to interact with itself (Oxenham, 1980).

Objectivity

The psychologist Miller's speech of 1972 provides a good example of an objective view of literacy (Miller, 1988). He claims that the effect of writing on ancient Greek culture was the replacement of myth by history and 'the invention of logic as a formal representation of the thought involved in argumentation and rhetoric' (1988, p. 214). His argument is that alphabetic literacy 'objectified' language, gave it the permanence lacked by the spoken word and improved personal memory. Writing gave birth to logic because it was possible to act on one's thoughts as if on objects. Writing made language self-conscious because it could be analysed. It nurtured the growth of knowledge and analytical thinking, the awareness of speech and 'directly affected the way the mind worked' (p. 218). As a result: 'Writing itself makes accessible aspects of language that are probably beyond the grasp of the illiterate thinker.' (p. 215).

Miller made a false distinction between 'primitive' myth and 'logical' history. As Lévi-Strauss has shown, myths are logical and it is equally arguable that history can be national myth. Literacy seen as the prime cause of a move to objectivity ignores the fact that, once people have learned to read and write they forget how they do it (Levine, 1986). How much conscious logic is needed in reading and writing is therefore questionable unless one is in the profession of analysing language. The objective argument obscures what may have been the other effects of literacy, that is the possibility of initiating a new discourse of logic rather than initiating logic itself.

Olson (l988) offers the objectivity argument under the guise of 'metalinguistic awareness'. He writes that a sociological or anthropological approach to literacy development emphasises that which is perpetuated, transmitted, passed on or taught, rather than what is learned . Literacy brings particular skills which oral cultures do not have. Olson remarks that for a literate person: 'language is known as language'. By this he means an artefact with a structure, composed of grammatical units like words and sentences, which has a meaning somewhat independent of the meaning intended by a speaker and which may be referred to by a metalanguage. Literacy, he says, involves knowing that language can be treated opaquely as a structure in its own right. Olson's argument is also ethnocentric. He appears to be arguing that there is a need to analyse, study and interpret language with metalinguistic awareness derived from parents' literate knowledge but that certain cultures cannot see 'language as language' especially if they prioritise speech. It is true rather that middle-class parents in Western cultures who wish to give their children an advantage at school talk to them pedagogically. In other words, we are not talking about literacy but about the race to prepare for schooling and schooled literacy. Olson's language-as-artefact seems to occur in an ideal realm and not in the minds of certain members of society. Olson's mistake here is to assume that it is words which 'adequately represent the conceptual distinctions that children can make', a cunning use of Bernstein. But Bernstein linked culture, language and class in the sense that language comments on or assumes as implicit the categories of class culture. If some children have metalinguistic awareness, other children may

use language for parody and silence. If Olson is saying that middle-class speech facilitates literacy, he is right in the case of schooled literacy, but Bernstein has already said this without any need for metalinguistic awareness or quantitative hints about 'large vocabulary' and the more literate home. We should remember Pattison's comment that the non-literate may be rejecting literacy precisely because it is an 'educated' preserve (Pattison, 1982). Olson's 'common language' shared by highly literate parents is not a common language but a sociolect, a class code whose aim is academic success. Olson gives no other reason for becoming literate, nor does he say what it is important.

Scribner and Cole (1988) criticise the view that there is a connection between writing and thinking clearly, or between writing and the development of the higher reasoning processes of extended abstract thinking. Writing, they argue, is not a fixed set of processes, an 'ability'. It is not possible, as Olson does, to claim transactional writing as a prototypical form and abstract exclusive cognitive skills from it. Nor is it possible to see writing as having its goal only in the essay-text or the well-crafted story. Should technical writing, like maths, also be excluded? Scribner and Cole point out that the Western emphasis on schooling is a model where transactional writing takes up the major proportion of time at school. They contrast this with literate practices among the Vai, a Liberian people.

Vai literacy is acquired without formal schooling. Their three scripts are used for different social purposes. Vai script serves the two classical functions of writing, memory and communication. Vai literates are primarily writers rather than readers since texts are rarely circulated. Reading in Vai is not a process of acquiring novel knowledge or material.

Scribner and Cole rarely found Britton's polar poetic and transactional texts among the Vai. Vai books are cumulative journals or notebooks with a variety of entries. Scribner and Cole write:

'It is apparent, that Vai People have developed highly diversified uses for writing and that personal values, pride of culture, hopes of gain – a host of pragmatic and ideological factors – sustain popular literacy.' (1988, p. 249)

Western literacy then, does not confer reason, but a sense of belonging to the literate and an easier flow of information between the literate and the powerful. Literacy alone cannot make you evaluate thought or the problems of language. With mechanical reading and writing skills you can have speedy comprehension and use of information, which is a great advantage in a Western society. Education can train in literacy but it can also discourage dissidence and disobedience. Dangerous information is controlled by governments because the population has been trained to respond to facts, not ideas (Pattison, 1982).

The objectivity argument is thus ideological. It is a way of justifying the division of social groups by thinking processes. To be properly literate is a form of control. Literacy enables you to bring your knowledge and experience to bear on whatever text passes before you, but: '... being able to read is not a necessary part of being civilised or uncivilised ... one can hate or kill with or without it.' (O'Neill, 1977).

The objectivity argument is also a philosophical argument which could be construed as idealist and rationalist. In the terms used by Williams (1977), it sets up an intermediate realm which is neither word nor thing, but form, essence or idea. The alternative tradition to that of Plato and Descartes is represented by Vico's claim that we can know only what we make or do. Herder wrote that language could not be 'added' to human beings like a special kind of acquisition or tool. Williams conclusion is that

'Language is then, positively, a distinctly human opening of and opening to the world; not a distinguishable or instrumental but a constitutive faculty.' (1977, p. 24). The high profile given to literacy is because literacy has a high emotional value. The non-reader is committing an offence against the social order, hence the label of stupidity and the resulting ostracism. The result, for example among young American Blacks, may be that they will refuse to learn to read and write precisely because society demands these skills as part of its definition of minimum human behaviour.

The illiterate threaten the conformism of a social order based on the use of science to create material wealth. Literacy is linked with rational participation in such

a society, but the literate person is actually integrated into a nexus of economic forces over which he or she has little control. Schools are seen by some politicians, parents, teachers and pupils as places where certain kinds of formal literacies can be measured in order to gauge 'intelligence', 'civilised behaviour' and the ability to reason. The pupil is, according to numerous school reports, in the simple position of being able to 'try hard' and 'make an effort' in order to gain the standard in literate practices which will enable him or her to gain good exam. grades. Even schools which claim to deal with the whole child cannot escape the prominence of exam. results. From another point of view, school is a kind of sorting office for children where less skilled readers and writers, most frequently those from backgrounds of poverty, and often boys, are sorted into the niches and career directions which will dominate their lives and their economic and social opportunities and which will control their ability to have a voice in society. They may be classed as practical rather than 'academic' and, at worst, may be labelled stupid by teachers and classmates.

The Great Divide

The 'great divide' between oral and literate cultures (Goody and Watt, 1962–3) rests on two hypotheses which have been summarised by Tannen (1985). First, spoken language is assumed to be context--bound and written discourse decontextualised. Secondly, it is assumed that in spoken language cohesion is accomplished through paralinguistic and prosodic cues whereas in written language cohesion must be lexicalised. Street identifies a further assumption about cohesion in theories of the great divide: that written language is more coherent and cohesive and spoken language is fragmentary and disconnected (Street, 1986).

There are five arguments against the great divide which can be summarised as follows:

1. Great divide theorists want to abstract a universal polarity or dichotomy from language use, be it through clearly defined oral and literate traditions or in

more subtle distinctions such as Tannen's 'features reflecting relative focus an involvement' (1985).

However, in all cases these distinctions abstract features from the 'totality of language practices' (Scribner and Cole, 1988). Orality and literacy are not in some way outside social practice but exist in use in social groups with different access to power and with different purposes.

2. Written and oral language may illuminate each other. The historian Carlo Ginzburg has shown in his study of the sixteenth century miller Menocchio how peasant mythologies and elemental materialism were grafted on to philosophies available in written texts (Ginzburg, 1980).

3. Abstraction is not restricted to written language. Language can be abstract or concrete. All cultures manipulate symbols in ways involving logical operations. It is thought structure which indicates abstraction, not written or spoken language alone. Thus oral cultures can be politically active without literacy. Literacy becomes necessary when power élites use it against the unlettered.

4. All language is context-dependent. Orators can be as detached as writers (Street, 1984).

5. As Graff has argued, a 'divide' ignores continuities (Graff, 1987).

Graff argues that literacy's beginnings in and restrictions by state, bureaucracy, Church and trade have continued in the hegemony of schooling. But while writing may have allowed the assembling of Plato's spoken words in a form impossible otherwise, the oral culture of the ancient world continued through the Middle Ages and into the electronic media. Orality and literacy may then have interacted and conditioned each other.

Although the Christian religion may have been spread by a combination of reading and preaching, religion has become closely associated with literacy, although classical and other forms of education were largely oral, and illiterates often come to books by having them read aloud by others. Since *Homo sapiens* is about 1 million years old and writing dates from about 3,000 B.C., Western literacy is only about 2,600 years old and printing 550 years old. People have been speakers a lot longer than they have been writers and 'mixed modes', that is the overlap between orality and literacy in communication, have been used 'in most societies' (Street, 1984 p. 110).

The Implications for Education

Medway, a practitioner who works in the field of English Studies and is influenced by Marxism and particularly by Vygotsky, sees the oral/literate argument as a question about the way to acquire knowledge in schools (Medway, 1980). Writing is only one way to acquire knowledge. It can also come from reading and conversation. It is not only writers who have critical or original views of the world, although writing can and should be used critically. Medway claims that because writing is associated with certain social purposes, schools often use it in the wrong way, for example writing information to a teacher who knows it already. Writing, he says, always has an audience and a teacher is not a general audience: '... the task the child is faced with must feel sometimes like talking in an empty room, to nobody – and under observation from a one-way mirror.' The students who enjoy this are playing a game, their real goal and addressee is still the teacher.

Medway's argument is that new knowledge needs a relationship with that knowledge, hence writing needs a 'thinking' stage, an 'expressive' stage of feelings, information, stories, mixed language use and thinking aloud. Medway claims that English works on 'the knowledge we have acquired from the unsystematic processes of living' (p. 8). The knowledge gained through English; for example of other people's knowledge in literary texts cannot, Medway argues, be publicly specified but can be displayed, for example in writing. If English is a process of knowledge working on knowledge it thus cannot be marginalised as unscientific or

simply intuitive and personal. But it is knowledge 'to be made, not given'. In all subjects there is personal and unstateable knowledge which needs to be worked on as much as the more explicit kinds. In English, the child learns to use its own knowledge and language as a resource in a dialogue with what was 'pre-disciplinary'.

Medway thus locates literacy within a range of active practices, spoken and written, which enable learning. He emphasises that these should be meaningful social practices which imply a dialogue between knower and new knowledge and between the knower and real or internalised audiences. Moreover, learning involves personal knowledge as well as public discourses. But a further question is, considering the autonomous myths which conceal more complex truths, what kind of discipline will offer evidence which will enable us to consider complexity?

An Educational Myth:

Literacy is central to mass education, it contains all that such education has been about. As Levine notes , the high official valuation of literacy in the West rests on its route to high academic success through tests and assessments (1986). Therefore everyone who has attended school is popularly supposed to be able to read and write anything. Huge financial and political investment have been made in schooling. In Britain since 1870, compulsory literacy has been based on school text; but is schooled literacy all encompassing?

Graff (1987) and Scribner and Cole (1988) agree that school is a site where literacy may be acquired and would therefore have an impact on the cognitive consequences of its possession and uses. The school may enable the pupil to generalise across a wide range of problems because it treats individual learning problems as examples of general classes of problems. The 19th century school, Graff argues, was a rational environment designed to inculcate literacy as a means of elevation and social training, and as a symbol of moral development, enabling discipline, work habits, piety and conformity. Popular uses of literacy were seen as dangerous, and a carefully structured environment was made to dispense literacy and print for socially approved uses.

Cook-Gumperz (1985) sees schooled literacy as formed by the social context of the school itself. Knowledge is to be had there but it is to be demonstrated in prescribed ways. What she calls 'functional' literacy and literacy 'rates' are school-taught and classroom-learned sets of skills which reflect a theory of pedagogy within the growth of educational institutions. Because there are prescribed 'ways of saying' in schools, teachers and critics confuse the technical skills necessary to learn to reason abstractly with the language register common to the classroom. Literacy, Cook-Gumperz argues, is not a series of instrumental skills, but a 'metacognitive process which makes other cognitive and social developments possible'.

The literacy-schooling equation is, Cook-Gumperz continues, perhaps only a century old. Schools both use and teach literacy. School learning is then not only a cognitive matter. The standard by which literacy is judged is also only recent and could be inaccurate. Literacy itself was once seen as a danger. Now illiteracy is the danger to the workforce.

Schooling in the 19th century was initially, especially in the Sunday schools, a response to the radicalism of popular literacy. The 1870 act divided the respectable from the unrespectable poor, the schooled from the unschooled, the educated from the uneducated. People were now differentiated according to their schooling achievement, and the curriculum became a means of social control. Schooling became the point of literacy, the resulting divisiveness may not even have been foreseen.

Popular literacy absorbed the aspiration to self-improvement through schooled literacy. At the same time, an industrial labour force was being manipulated into schools to learn what Cook-Gumperz calls the 'schooled competences'. She argues that it was these two aspects together which led to schooling as a social movement with literacy as its first step. The idea of literacy as a path to economic well-being grew with the idea of illiteracy as a failure of schooling and a failure in self-improvement.

In the twentieth century, school-based learning is a universal and standardised technical skill and part of a public curriculum, whose content and methodology are

determined by pedagogy, as is its evaluation. The knowledge of the less literate seems like lesser knowledge and the school becomes arbiter of attainment in the individual's entire career. Cook-Gumperz implies that the social stratification in schooling helps make a divided society seem like a stratified whole as well as keeping individuals from each other and causing social mobility. She says that intelligence testing standardises the 'universal' development of cognitive skills; hence educational failure becomes 'lack of ability' and testing helped the bureaucratisation of schooling. Literacy passes thus from the state of moral virtue to that of a cognitive skill, as testing and learning techniques become more technologically sophisticated.

Cook-Gumperz argues that the supposed products of education – benefit to the individual, the appreciation and control of more symbolic information, the widening of cultural interest, a change in consciousness – have been subordinated to schooling with its documents, degrees, selection and choice. Yet literacy is part of our pluralistic sociocultural heritage and can never solely be of the school.

Literacy may not change consciousness simply because it enables the understanding and creation of printed messages, but also because of the changes that ability brings about and the ability to assess the usefulness of such changes. The myths of literacy have become part of the complexities about learning to read and write which are generally drawn on in terms of 'common sense'. School is perhaps the myth with strongest hold on the popular imagination.

Post-modern Literacies

The alternative to the autonomous view of literacy is to see literacy or literacies as ideological: that is as practice, process and usage; as socially constructed. The notion of the fixed, the eternal standard of literacy is an illusion. So is the social neurosis that literacy is always out of reach, never sufficient or up to scratch, an argument which arises specifically from anxiety about economic competition and from 'free' societies organised as rat races for entry to a meritocracy. Autonomous theories of literacy connect to the modernising movement which began in the Enlightenment and which is characterised by a belief in human progress through

reason, liberal social theory and individualism. It has resulted in the use of the written word as a measure of intelligence within mass schooling which is intended to achieve these aims (Graff, 1987). It is the faith that reading, writing and arithmetic are the necessary foundations for universal school education.

If autonomous theories are modern, then ideological theories are *post-modern* in the sense that they are part of the necessary recognition of pluralism and difference. But, as Williams' work on culture has shown, theories of difference and dissent also go back to the Enlightenment and to the tradition of human making in Vico and Herder (Williams, 1976).

Summary of the Theoretical Aspects of Literacy which Support the Enquiry

In Section 4.4, I have argued that, in contrast to what are described by Street as 'autonomous' literacies and by Graff as 'monologic myths', literacy is a social construction, renewed over time and subject to 'disjunctions and discontinuities'. Historically, literacy is not an abstract term for the progressive increase of human skills in reading and writing. No single definition of it is possible, so that it cannot simply be seen as a barometer of social standards. The uses of literacy depend on the purposes of its users, their situated perspectives of what reading and writing are good for. Literacies are thus planted firmly in people's lives. They make a difference to those lives and that difference may be one of desired discontinuity as well as continuity. Each text, that is whatever can be read as text, is one half of a dialogue with a reader. I argue that there is no direct correlation between literacy and civilisation, awareness of language, rationality or objectivity and that speech and writing are in different permutations for different purposes in different cultures. I have noted that within Western culture schooled literacy is but one particular kind among many, although a powerful and dominant one.

MK School as a 'Protocol'

MK School, as a site for the study of literacies grounded in the lives of staff and students, is a 'protocol' in Scholes' sense (Scholes, 1989). It is 'a framework in which to negotiate ... differences' (p. 51). These differences are within myself as researcher, interpreter and reader of the school and at the same time as a teacher who perpetuates or renegotiates codes passed on through pedagogy. They are also in the interactions and negotiations between staff and students, with their different locations in time, and the text of the school, with its literate traditions, set within the disjunction of the new town of Milton Keynes.

4.5. An Inquiry into Culture

Introduction

I have argued for a sociocultural theory of literacy. I have suggested that when children in my school are observed by me, a teacher, reading or writing, that that observation is already part of a historical dis junction between my literacy and theirs. Children write or read at the latest point in a continuing redescription and redefinition of literacy and schooling in Great Britain and in the history of literacy and schooling in the locality and in the nation. In this case, the locality is Milton Keynes, a new town, a particular concept which is the culmination of 'modern' thinking which has been grafted on to the area from nowhere. The problem that this inquiry has to solve is: what evidence can I draw on to enable me to describe the framework of which the whole range of literacies in Milton Keynes are a part?

I now argue for a theory of culture in which my theory of literacy will sit. The link between literacy and culture in a school is, I suggest, in the field of 'English' and in its manifestation as language across the curriculum. The learning and use of English is itself part of entering a culture because the conventions of English are cultural conventions. In particular, in a secondary school, schooled literacy involves entering a culture of subject divisions with their own conventions of English. Struggles within schools about English are, I would argue, struggles about the politics of culture. Children meanwhile bring their own histories of literacy and schooling

from wherever they have lived before to their secondary school in Milton Keynes, or they may be part of the first generation of new town children born and bred or they may be part of a relative historical continuity centred on Wolverton. In all cases, they have entered a culture which was already given but which they then proceed to confirm or to transform. I argue that school is a site for disputes over definitions of culture and that this involves disputes over what it is to be literate. The national curriculum, for example, seeks, among other things, to establish, or re-establish, a common culture with supposedly common definitions of literacy.

A model of culture is more complex than a simple view of the one-way transmission of acceptable knowledge. The problematic of culture functions on several levels, from children in and out of the classroom to the context of Milton Keynes, from the historical processes which produced the new town as designed environment – to which people may bring fragments of their previous backgrounds and where they are expected to build a new culture from scratch – to the abstract questions which enabled planners to conclude that a new culture and a new literacy can arise from human reason. Pertinent also is British culture of the 1980s and 1990s: the breaking of old structures, the new middle-class power base and within this Milton Keynes as a culture of construction and of disjunction. School is a paradigmatic instance within the complexity of culture. It is Raymond Williams who has analysed and displayed the complex definitions of culture.

Defining Culture: The Work of Raymond Williams

I turn to Raymond Williams because, as a social and cultural historian, and a seminal influence on the conceptualisation of English Studies, he has traced the intertwinings and contradictions in the concept of culture. In a series of works, Williams located the development of the meanings of culture through the Enlightenment, French Revolution, Industrial Revolution and Romantic movement (Williams, 1963, 1965, 1973, 1977, 1983, 1988). He suggested that we have received the meanings of culture historically as part of a conflict and debate bound up with social, political and historical problems which are still unresolved.

Let me offer a brief summary of Williams' views about the origins of the meanings of culture. In the 17th century, Milton used culture not as a noun of agricultural process, the tending of crops or animals, as it had been used up to that time, but as a metaphor of human development. By the 18th century, culture had come to be a synonym for civilisation. an achieved state but with a sense of development. With the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, culture came to have another meaning. The metaphor was now extended to mean a separate entity, a general process which described the unprecedented social upheavals of the time; culture finally had three meanings or strands, which I will call the ideal, the best and the social.

The first strand, culture as the ideal, is seen in Hegel, Marx and Lenin and in Williams' use of the term as a general 'external' human process of intellectual, artistic and spiritual development. This strand continues in the idea of general human progress, the 'ascent of man' [sic] and in cruder versions of Marxism.

The second strand, culture as the best, seen in Matthew Arnold's formulation of 'the best which has been thought and said', is an 'interior' meaning in which spiritual development was cut off from gross material development and civilisation. Whereas civilisation was seen as external and artificial, human needs and impulses were seen to be 'natural'. This strand of meaning continued in the work of Eliot, Leavis and Williams himself in 'Culture and Society'. This strand became 'high' culture; what, in its common sense use, 'cultural' still means in disputes about education.

The third strand, the social, filtered through the Enlightenment with Vico, Herder and Kant and their versions of humans as makers of culture. In this strand come Tylor's ethnology, anthropology and the Williams of 'The Long Revolution' who saw culture as:

'... a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.' (1965 p. 57)

The conflicts and intertwinings of William's' three meanings of culture still continue in education. The *ideal*, I would suggest, is still seen in the assumption that social and economic progress can be restored through the 'restoration' of a literate standard and heritage. The *best* can be seen in the British and American governments' attempts to specify what the best literature and -language are. The *social* strand can be seen in the struggle of post-colonial ethnic groups to assert their own ways of life and ways with words. The ironic counterpart of the third strand is the belief that instant culture can be produced in the rational designing of new towns.

I wish to argue that the first two strands of meaning – the ideal and the best – are myths in Graff's sense, which need to be deconstructed. Williams himself espoused these myths at certain times in the forms of culture as common progress and as the preserved works of the great. If these myths were reliable then definitions of literate knowledge, of English and of language in school would be agreed, accepted and preserved as a common heritage. I will now deconstruct these two myths.

Two Cultural Myths

A. The Myth of Common Progress: Culture is Common

In his early seminal text, 'Culture and Society 1780–1950', Williams sees the history of the idea of culture as '... a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life'. Culture is thus a 'process, not a conclusion'. Williams eschews any view that culture leads to a Hegelian ideal, but he continues to emphasise culture as 'total qualitative assessment' and as our 'common inquiry' (1963).

The arguments against culture as common progress are as follows:

1. Williams seems to have been writing in the hope of rediscovering a common cultural tradition of dissent rather than from within one. 'Culture and Society' was written in the absence of a collective project (Eagleton, 1984).

2. William's' attempt to create a cultural heritage rests on the idea of 'our common experience', 'our common life', 'our common language'. One of the issues raised by the creation of national curriculum is the assumption that someone knows what we all share. In a multicultural pluralist society it is not possible to assume that we all share a language and ways with words.

3. If culture is common to some people it will not be common to others. Supposed traditions of common descent always marginalise someone. If this is so, we are led to the question of who communicates the tradition, where it is communicated and who resists it. There is no guarantee that the cultural meanings we have inherited are continuous or consistent. Milton Keynes is inhabited by a large number of displaced people who may bring and act out their differences.

4. Williams is in fact emphasising cultural continuities and ignoring discontinuities. He argues credibly for the inclusion of working-class cultures in a stock of inherited culture but he makes no provision for the disjunctions which an emphasis on, say, class rather than common language would introduce. This would raise the further question of which class has control of what is regarded as common culture.

5. William's' account makes no mention of the material spaces in which human activities take place. We could contrast his account, in order to bring up this difference, with the work of the Marxist Habermas (in Johnson et al, 1982) and in the commentaries by Negt and Kluge (ibid.) and Eagleton (1984).

Habermas describes the 'classical bourgeois public sphere' of the 17th and 18th centuries. This was the network of clubs, coffee houses and journals where the middle classes could hold public discourse. Negt and Kluge show how this sphere was transformed as the middle classes tried to retain their spaces in conflict with

the media and state institutions such as schools. At the same time, the working classes had a different network of spaces, the 'counter public sphere', which only became visible during conflicts. Eagleton describes a third sphere, the home, where the public discourse and conflicts of the public sphere were in dialogue with the family and its private experience. He suggests that feminism has created a new counter public sphere which allows the discussion of public discourse in terms of private experience and puts new ideas back into the public sphere.

In the light of the idea of 'spheres', we could see Williams' view of culture in common as a way to say that only one sphere exists unhampered by incursions from mass culture and the market place. Eagleton comments that the line of reasoning through Arnold, Leavis, Eliot and Williams, which states that the autonomy of art and culture as divorced critical activity must continue, occurred precisely when the public sphere was being divided up among other interests. English and English Literature became ways to pacify and incorporate such interest.

Schools can be seen as material spaces where there are dialogues about continuity and plurality and disputes about who owns spaces and who can speak or write in them; for example, when 'outlawed' discourses such as graffiti are written by pupils on the fabric of the school, its walls, desks and books.

I will now deconstruct the myth of culture as the best.

B. The Myth of Culture as the 'Best'

1. Williams' Account of Culture as the Best

This second strand of meaning of culture comes, in Williams' account, from the association in the 18th century of the words 'culture' and 'civilisation'. Culture was taken to be the historical self--development of humanity. Civilisation was taken to mean both the process of becoming civilised and the secular process of human development. Herder attacked the universality implicit in these meanings and introduced the idea of 'cultures'. Williams states that, after Herder, culture developed two new meanings in the nineteenth century both of which separated culture

as human values from material, that is industrial, development. Culture came to mean both intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development and the works and practices involved in this development. These two meanings, Williams continues, met in Matthew Arnold's 'Culture and Anarchy' (Williams, 1983). In this tradition, a selection is made from human achievements of the past by groups and individuals who claim both to be able to identify the best that has been thought and said and to know that their selection will be, in some way, good for those other groups who are to receive the best.

2. Some Problems with Williams' Account

If we look more closely at Williams' account in his early work of this second strand from the point of view of the ideological theorists of literacy, we will be able to see how Williams himself demonstrated the particular weaknesses of this strand as an adequate definition of culture. The major weakness of this argument is that the 'best' definition of culture is in some way 'autonomous'.

In 'Culture and Society' (1963), Williams was still working within the Leavisite tradition. The second strand of culture, he argues, was the separating off of certain moral and intellectual activities to provide a 'court of appeal' and a 'scale of integrity ' in the face of industrial change. In Williams' account the court of appeal is not alienated from the whole process of development. It is a 'mode of interpreting our common experience'. Williams however fails to say who the judges in the moral and intellectual court of appeal would be. The 'best' is apparently meant to be fixed and known by all, but this is reification and gives the 'best' the status of a myth in Graff's sense. Through such reification, Williams is still placing himself in the male line of Arnold, Leavis and Eliot who sought to pass on, protect and preserve a selective tradition of significant works of intellectual and artistic activity with education as one of the channels of its reproduction (McLaren, 1988). Leavis's emphasis on a cultured minority is detectable in Williams' 'total qualitative assessment', 'a record of our reactions in thought and feelings ... our meanings and definitions'. Williams is trying to have similarity without difference,

he is trying to merge the 'best' with the idea of a total description of social practice. It is not however possible to merge an autonomous canon and a description of cultures which may throw up disjunction. This dilemma can be seen in the government's attempts to prescribe a canon of literature for English teaching in schools. Should one group choose what is best for everyone or should pupils encounter books valued by different groups of people in different cultural groups?

It can be argued as a counterargument to the myth of culture as the best that English literature gained its supposed autonomy as an unshakeable tradition of worth because of the decline of religion as a form of social cement. The splitting off of literature as a court of appeal then led to a myth of decline bound up with a call to restore a lost heritage. We have already seen this same mechanism in the myth of a crisis in literacy. The proposed solution under the national curriculum has been for students in schools to be forced to study certain works deemed to be 'high culture' by bureaucrats in order to ensure the continuation of values, standards and national identity which are seen to be under threat by the government. As McLaren points out, the return to lost values is a symptom of social and economic crisis or major change (1988).

An alternative, *ideological*, view of the 'best' is an inquiry about what texts are *good for* as an alternative to the assumption that they are simply part of an autonomous canon. If they are to be passed on to future generations as writing which has achieved a continuity of consideration and respect we cannot accept that their worth is simply moral goodness or social cohesion. In any case, while these arguments rage pupils are constructing their own canons from pop records, computer games, videos and, indeed, books.

If literature is not a canon of the best but is rather those powerful texts which different people and groups use for various purposes it is a plurality and not an autonomous 'thing'. Literate and other cultural activities then became part of a broader range of language practices within the values and interests of diverse groups (McLaren, 1988).

In schools, culture as the 'best' appears in the privileging of certain moral, intel-

lectual, spiritual, artistic and linguistic styles and works which are seen as autonomous and correct. These styles and works are associated with delivery or transmission teaching and passive reception by pupils. Although pupils tend to stereotype all teachers as representatives of this view of culture, teachers who apply these ideas are part of a pedagogic tradition which aims to 'raise' all students, but particularly working-class ones, to standards which will afford them opportunities in later life and an educated mind. This pedagogic tradition is currently boosted by legislation in the national curriculum and in the statutory duty of every state school teacher to deliver it. But pressure also comes from parents of all classes who have internalised the 'delivery' approach as the one which shows that schools are maintaining standards and from the pupils themselves who believe they have an entitlement to the 'basics'.

Such an emphasis means that in the official activities of the school the book is privileged and non-book based subjects or areas, such as the 'practical' or the 'vocational', as well as popular cultures which include the electronic media and the skills pupils bring from them, are devalued in the public messages the school gives out. Part of the thrust to maintain or raise standards, depending on the ethos of the school, is the marginalisation or the making invisible of pupils' subcultural language practices, including literate practices. Various methods may be used to marginalise these practices. They may be declared illiterate, stigmatised, trivialised, ridiculed, morally disapproved of, prohibited or simply erased.

The critics of the autonomous approach are those teachers and academics who come from a Vygotskian tradition in which learning is located within social practices. In this tradition the teacher starts from where the child is, which will include the child's popular culture as a valid object of inquiry. Within this tradition, the child is an active learner who can use and create texts for particular purposes within a wide range of textual forms.

The view of continuity must, as I have previously remarked, be tempered with that of diversity, and, indeed, of opposition. We should not forget that texts within social practices can be used politically in the widest sense. The blanket label of

illiteracy may cover the fact that 'illiterates' are not fluent in English or that they have been disadvantaged as readers and writers. The apparent neutrality of the term illiteracy may thus conceal gendered, racial, economic and social contexts of literacy. The way people use texts in these contexts could be called uses of literacy *within popular cultures*. The way texts are read and written in popular cultures will be in relationship to other cultural forms, relationships either of unity or disunity of reading and writing practice (McLaren, 1988).

If popular culture is regarded by some teachers as inimical then popular cultural forms of literacy are also marginalised by schools in favour of 'the best'. However, students live in a world of popular cultural forms, particularly in the mass media of television, video, newspapers, magazines, popular paperbacks and computer games. In the next section, I will look at three traditions of the discussion of culture which present the argument about popular culture and the mass media. I will then summarise the implications of my argument for education.

The Mass Media and Popular Culture

Apart from the legacy of the Leavisite tradition which we have seen in Williams' early work, there are three other enterprises in the humanities which have continued and developed the idea of culture as the 'best' and which impact upon education. First, there is the tradition of an unbroken but now threatened line of European high culture (e.g. Steiner, 1988). Steiner's 'classical reader' is able to purchase books, journals, privacy and silence and, by implication, is male, white and middle-class. Secondly, the tradition of media studies initiated by McLuhan foregrounds literate practices as superior to other media and is now championed by Postman (Postman, 1986). Postman's claim that print culture enables a coherent and orderly public disourse and the ability to subject thought to concentrated scrutiny whereas the electronic media reduce discourse to entertainment ignores the demanding reading competences required to interpret the mass media. Thirdly, there is that tendency in the Marxist tradition characteristic of the Frankfurt School, represented by Horkheimer and Adorno (1973), which sees the media as

a tool of capitalism and the literary tradition as an area of alternative values. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that there is a 'culture industry' which dominates a mass public through technology, purveys rubbish, puts truth at the service of profit and makes people into passive consumers.

Horkheimer and Adorno contrast the culture industry with their own version of a classical European canon which includes Schönberg and Picasso and which mistrusts style in favour of 'the logic of matter'. They thus set up an absolute dichotomy between 'aesthetic barbarity' on the one hand and 'the creations of the spirit' on the other. They find the very notion of culture problematic because they see it as a way of classifying, organising and administering intellectual creation and putting it into a compartment where it exists in isolation while mass culture carries the field.

Although there *is* an industry of culture based on ever-developing technologies and sold and consumed in worldwide markets, not all mass cultural products are based on style alone, not all eschew truth or debase language, not all are unchallenging and provide ready-made categories. Most importantly, Horkheimer and Adorno omit from their argument the possibility that consumers may use mass-culture products within complex mental frameworks which may allow them to manipulate products for their own ends, that is, as with texts, to see what they are 'good for'.

There is an alternative view of mass culture within Marxism associated with Walter Benjamin, which argues that some cultural forms have liberating elements. Frith suggests that mass culture should be seen as a struggle for the meaning of cultural symbols (Frith, 1983). Mass culture then needs to be renamed *popular culture* because it reflects genuinely popular choices, feelings and attitudes. Such a culture focuses on experiences different from those associated with high culture. They are to do with the immediate, the transitory, the experienced and the lived. a constructed, contradictory and contested process of producing viable daily experiences which make sense, contain pleasure and are liveable (Chambers, 1985). Chambers argues that people put their culture together as '*bricolage*', in the light of their personal desires in their own particular lived reality. For example, the school

pupil who reads Thomas Hardy, listens to heavy metal music and opera, idolises James Dean and likes Walt Disney and horror films. In this process, new moments of cultural power, decision, choice and intervention are diffused, learnt and applied (Chambers, op. cit.).

Post-modernism

So far I have argued that culture as the 'best', particularly in literacy, is inadequate as a model because it is not grounded in the plurality of human activities and intentions. I will now argue that a *post-modern* view is the next logical step in accepting culture as plurality.

I take post-modernism to mean the end of that rationalising movement in Western society which began with the Enlightenment and whose main thrust is the assumption that logical centralised planning and control will ensure the material and spiritual progress of all. The end of this ideal has resulted in a new attention to the plurality of cultures, a nostalgia for past traditions and a knowing, critical and ironic stance towards texts of all kinds. I have already discussed in Chapter Three the experience of living in a new town which is a planned environment deliberately selecting from the past what is considered necessary or best. Negatively speaking, post-modernism can be the feeling of living in such a simalcrum in which signs and images seem to float free from the real world and reality as experienced seems shallow and flat, surface without depth. In a post-modern situation everyone understands the 'game' and can choose from available texts, high, low or avant-garde (Eco, 1985). A post-modern view is more positively one in which all cultural forms become of interest to us. A post-modern literacy is one where it is possible to use texts in any combination one wishes, in which classic and popular writing coexist with television, video, recorded music and electronic games in the individual's daily life.

The danger with post-modern theory is that, as in Baudrillard's work, everything can be reduced to illusion. There is no room for economic, political, ideological or linguistic change. Because of the connection between post-modernism and mass consumer markets, where the individual makes a choice from a vast range of

products, it is possible for theory to withdraw into a 'small coterie of expertise' and to leave market forces to control people's choices (Said, 1985). A critical approach to post-modernism looks at all the material used by people in a context without assuming that all texts have equal value and at the historical breaks and continuities which led to that particular context (Said, op. cit.).

Culture as the Social or Documentary

Williams' third strand, the social or documentary meaning of culture, provides the basis for an adequate way to look at the culture of Milton Keynes and MK School. It was this strand which Williams emphasised in his later work, an emphasis which effected the 'break' in English Studies from the Cambridge tradition and towards Cultural Studies. In 'The Long Revolution', Williams turned away from the idea of culture as a court of appeal and towards an emphasis on culture and cultures as actively created ways of life (Williams, 1965). In Williams' definition, the social or documentary is a way of describing culture as something ordinary, taken for granted, held in common and generally understood within social groups. It is a description of a way or ways of life of a people, period or group. It therefore takes into account similarities as well as differences.

Williams argues that common progress is a 'long revolution' which was brought forth by democracy, industry and communications. He sees people actively demanding self-government, decision making, extended learning, literacy, communications and a better standard of living. Within this view of culture as activity, Williams stresses people's creation of the world for themselves through the learning of cultural rules of perception through communication. With the social learning from which we learn the culture's systems, we are also offered 'the best', which Williams now defines as evolved forms of ways of description in common use and based on shared communication systems. Culture then is an area of novelty, change, remaking and reorganisation of experience. Cultures themselves are a selection and selections change when cultures change (Williams, 1965, op. cit.).

Williams' ideas in 'The Long Revolution' are more useful to describe Milton

Keynes as a context for literacy because they are dialogic. We become ourselves in the way we organise both the individual and the collective. Literature as a particular example would thus have to be seen as contiguous with the 'collective mental structures of particular social groups' (Hall, 1981). Williams' view of culture is now an anthropological one in which the individual inherits culture patterns and transforms that inheritance. It is still arguable however that people may acquire false models from their culture and that such models may need to be looked at critically. In 'The Long Revolution', Williams has shown culture to be all those descriptions through which people make sense of and reflect on experience. Literature then becomes one such description and not apart from the historical process (Hall, 1980). The study of culture is thus an analysis of the way the sum of social practices is organised and gives the 'structure of feeling' of a period.

Williams was criticised by E. P, Thompson for missing out the dimension of struggle from 'The Long Revolution'. By 'Marxism and Literature' (1977) Williams was acknowledging the idea of struggle, but in 'The Long Revolution' he emphasises indissoluble social practices without any apparent disjunctions. Where 'The Long Revolution' was important though was in its opposition to that Marxist model which states that economic base determines superstructure. Williams shows a dialogue between the two, emphasising that people have an active part in the creation of their cultures.

His view of culture then is still not 'common' or 'total'. Neither are we told who decides which ways of description are 'evolved' enough to count as the best. If there really is no agreement on what is common but only, as I have already argued, continuities and discontinuities, who is to decide? If we sever from Williams' theory both the ideal and the social, we are left with the social view of culture as a starting point.

This does not mean however that the ideal and the best are not still in operation as cultural myths. In a study of MK School we may find these myths and we would then need to describe them, without taking them at face value, as part of a description of the entire culture of the school which does not exclude what is

officially invisible and which takes account of struggles, discontinuities and marginalisation as a strategy.

Refining a Theory of Culture

In the preceding sections I showed how Raymond Williams moved away from a description of culture based in a tradition of writing within English Studies and moved towards a more anthropological position. In this section I argue that Williams' view of culture still needs to be refined in order adequately to describe a total picture such as that of MK School. This refinement will, I suggest, derive from those texts which Williams himself used in the formulation of his later ideas, that is the works of European Marxists and of the structuralist traditions. I am now moving away from simple models of culture, such as high and low, towards a more complex and shifting view. I will look at four aspects of culture in order to refine my hypothesis. These aspects are 1) structure and experience which will lead me to suggest a 'secular' view of culture 2) power 3) youth cultures and their uses of time, space and objects 4) subversion and taboo.

Structure and Experience

For the description of the literacy of pupils in MK School, we need to know how to explain their uses of literacy in their subculture. Do they have a free choice to create and use literacies or do they simply operate codes which already exist? Is there a way to involve both possibilities?

Tony Burgess stresses active cultural making by school pupils. In 'Changing English' he sets out his ideas for the further development of English Studies (Burgess, 1985). Taking the view of English teaching as cultural making and of language as historical rather than abstract, he traces this current of thought back to the work of Vygotsky and his theories of the parallel historical changes of word meanings and thought through interaction between signs as they are used publicly and the active process of meaning creation on the part of the language user.

The growing points for the heuristic use of language in English classrooms are,

Burgess writes, in the work of Williams, the CCCS and Foucault. In Williams' account of Voloshinov, Burgess finds a theory of language as a social and cultural practice. In Foucault's work, he finds a social theory of language in which discourse reflects relations of power and social control. The relevance for school is that:

'Classrooms are related in their objectives to discourses of varying kinds: not only academic discourses, but also politically and educationally oriented discourses, together with the potentially numberless range of discourses through which culture is constituted. In addition, discourses are created in classrooms, related to discourses in the culture more widely but constructed by the central participants, pupils and teachers' (pp. 16–17).

Thus, Burgess writes, in implied criticism of the work of some structuralists, that it is wrong to assign to education only a reproductive role as the reproducer of ideology because language is never a dead purveyor of fixed and permanently established meanings. It is always the site of dialectic processes, continuously reconstructed and remade and always involving dominant discourses, power, resistance and critique. If classrooms are sites of cultural making then power rests in them. If there were no power in English classrooms, Burgess remarks, then they would not need to be talked about every fifty years.

Effectively then, Burgess is suggesting that the '*culturalist*' stream of English Studies would be enriched by theories of the dialectical relationship between structure and experience which stress active cultural making within discourses of power. The emphasis is very much on the making, the cultural or experiential, rather than on the social structures.

Burgess's work still begs the question of the power relation between the social and ideological formation of the reader and that of the text, (McLaren, 1988; Scholes, 1985).

I have thus far argued for a culturally and historically located model of literacy. I suggest now that it is possible to refine this model by describing a '*secular*' model

of literacy in culture. This is one in which structure and experience are both taken into consideration but where structure is not taken in an idealist sense of something which is autonomous, eternal and unchangeable. Such a model would show literacy in the interaction between existing codes and actual literate practices but located culturally and historically. The objection to any theory which proposes a human essence, an objection which makes a critical divide between structuralists and post-structuralists, is that there is no central transcendent reference point, universal structure or essence or 'transcendental signifier'. This view is a product of that aspect of Saussure's theories in which a sign has meaning only in its relation to other signs. This is the crux of my argument for a secular view of literacy in culture. All other aspects of a secular model follow from this. In order to go into more detail to describe a secular model of literacy in culture, I will now describe the extremes of the two polarities of experience and structure.

Culturalism and Structuralism: Two Paradigms

The fundamental difference in emphasis between the two traditions is culturalism's emphasis on experience and intention at the expense of structure and structuralism's emphasis on the controlling role of underlying structures at the expense of the individual's creativity in culture. At their most extreme, culturalism and structuralism should represent arguments that, in the case of culturalism, lived empirical experience and the real relations observed between people are the only basis of study, in the case of structuralism, that the subject is 'spoken' by forms over which she or he has no control.

I am suggesting that a view of culture must sit somewhere within this range. Until we know where the relative power of individual creativity and 'control' by structure sit, we will not know how the literacy of an individual in a school in Milton Keynes relates to the structures of his or her social group or to the structures of schooled literacy. I will suggest that a 'secular' view of structure will solve this problem and that a 'secular' view of culture then gives us an *entrée* to the relationship between reader and text.

Culturalism and Experience

To illustrate the role of experience in culturalism, I will use the work of E. P. Thompson. In his seminal work 'The Making of the English Working Class' Thompson narrates with what has been called a realist or empiricist approach the self-making of the industrial working class in England. Thompson is a good example of culturalism because his book is a 'text of the break'. It was written in the context of the post-war 'settlement', the revival of capitalist production and the Cold War (Johnson et al, 1982). Its political purpose was to portray a dormant radical populism about to resurface by rescuing from the past an alternative countrywide culture. In reaction to previous paradigms of economic or scientific reductionism in Marxist writing and to Leavis' model of literary discourse as a way to discuss what had been lost as a result of the Industrial Revolution, Thompson demonstrates an apparent order and meaning in the culture of those working-class people previously underrepresented in historical writing. His method is to stress common lived experience as the basis for the making of alternative culture. He eschews almost all ideas with any resemblance to a structural explanation of class , although he admits the role of conditioning, in that people are born or enter involuntarily into certain productive relations. People act because they have values as a motive and differing values derive from differing views of human satisfaction. The role of the base structure becomes one of support or maintenance of certain kinds of community and not the iron determinant of every human action.

What we will find valuable in Thompson for an ethnographic study of literacy is the idea of alternative cultures which use literacy actively in ways which have remained hidden and do so because of a common political experience, for example, the weaver poets of Lancashire (p. 321 ff.). This is the strength of his argument.

What is the weakness of this argument? In casting doubt on all structure, category or law above and beyond the historian who studies texts and notes patterns that occur in disparate situations over fluid time, Thompson is giving an untenable omnipotence to the conscious mind of that very historian.

Gaine (1987), citing the work of Chris Mullard, gives an example from the field

of race which shows the fallacy of omitting structure from considerations of culture. A liberal view of culture which acknowledges diversity of beliefs, languages and customs, he writes, ignores the material and economic order which oppresses certain racial groups and which has a history, an order which is fundamental, he argues, to our culture. Hence theories of racial integration and multiracial education presuppose allegiance to the political and economic order. We see then that a thesis which did not question structure would be leaving out an essential part of the picture of injustice which is the motive behind Thompson's work.

In a theory of literacy in culture then, we need to consider structure in all cultures and their relationship to each other. This includes dominant and alternative cultures. Thompson does not give us a reliable way to describe the place of the individual literacy learner in cultures and his or her relationship with structures.

Structuralism and Control

We turn now to the other extreme, the control of the individual by structure, to see if it will yield a better model.

An extreme form of structuralism would deny not only that structures are socially and relativistically determined but that there is no such phenomenon as a human mind but only a vast transcendent structure/mind which 'thinks' human society and culture. The temptation of such a theory would be to divorce the academy totally from practical reality and to carry out a structuralism, quietist and élitist, in the university while market forces are allowed free rein outside (Said, 1984). Such an extreme is best represented by aspects of Lévi-Strauss's work.

Language is, he has written, '... an unreflecting totalisation ... human reason which has its reason and of which man knows nothing.' (quoted in Said, 1985). Lévi-Strauss's view is that rules and structures are unconscious and that the unconscious is reducible to a function: 'the symbolic function ... which is carried out according to the same laws among all men' (quoted in Leitch, 1983).

In Derrida's work, for example, this dichotomy becomes an argument about *literacy*. From the association of the printed word with the Logos, with authority

and truth and Biblical revelation has arisen the myth that literacy gives access to a single essential truth through reading. Language would be transparent, the book an unmediated view of an eternally fixed and immediately present meaning. Plato in the Phaedrus thus considered writing inferior to speech because writing was speech written down and speech is nearer to that 'communicative presence' wherein what is immediately present to consciousness is true (Derrida, 1978).

The relativist, or pluralist, and materialist secular tradition in structuralism is represented by the later Barthes, Derrida and Lacan. It continues the work of Vico, Humboldt, Sapir and Whorf. In this tradition, there is no essential *a priori* universal structure built into the human mind before the formation of the human being in the material-historical circumstances of cultures. Since language and other symbolic systems or codes pre-exist the subject, the socialisation into self occurs through the encounter with the codes. The privileged position given to language derives from its function as the operative constituent of human identity. It is, in a sense, an anthropological theory, like Williams' social/documentary strand. In terms, for example, of texts, within the secular tradition the reader must be positioned somewhere in relation to the codes which form the voice of the text. There is no 'ideal' reader since there is no ideal 'objective' position.

The danger of a hermetic structuralism then is monologism, speaking of itself and not of the world. Scholes argues that the hermetic view of a system of pure differences in which we are supposed to encounter not the thing but only the trace or sign of the thing ignores the third part of Saussure's signifier/signified formula which is the referent. Thus Derrida's argument that all signs only recall other signs omits the human mind as the instrument which relates one sign to another. Differences alone cannot produce a system, it also needs continuities (Scholes, 1985).

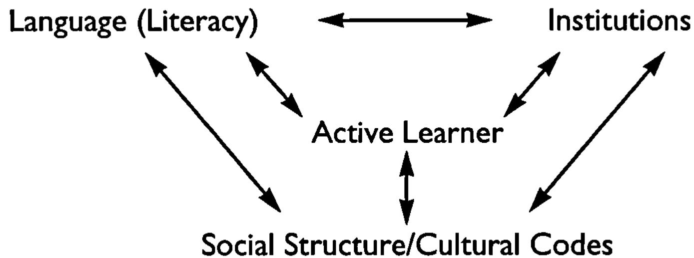
Scholes argues that a better way to look at culture is in terms of historic codes and actions still on an analogy with language. This is the *secular theory*. In this theory, for example, institutions arise 'at a particular time and (move) through history like any other systemic networks of possibilities'. Scholes argues that power lies within these invisible immaterial cultural pressures which control and to which we

must accommodate ourselves. Thus he is placing an emphasis here an code rather than on act.

The implication for textual studies is that they must be '... pushed beyond the discrete boundaries of the page and the book into the institutional practices and social structures which can themselves be usefully studied as codes and texts.' (p. 17).

I would sum up what we can learn from Scholes about the placing of literacy in a secular theory of culture by the following diagram:

Figure 1. Literacy in a Secular Theory of Culture.



In such a model the individual literacy learner in Milton Keynes is in interaction with particular language codes, particular institutions and particular social structures of a time and place whose codes can be studied and read as texts. That is, there is not only a case for studying experience but also for looking at the code which is the other half of a dialogic activity.

I have argued that a secular model of structuralism adds a dimension which has been lacking in some areas of English Studies where agency has been valued above code. I have now suggested that the dialogue between code and act is a better object of study. I will now look at same more specific details of a secular model.

The Secular Model of Cultures

A secular model provides the basis for an interpretation of literacy in culture because it is the meeting point for culturalism and structuralism, act and code in context. In order to refine this model I will use three British theories from three different traditions: Stuart Hall from Cultural Studies, Roy Bhaskar from philosophy

and Coward and Ellis from post-structuralism. I will thus be showing that it is possible to redress the culturalist emphasis of English Studies with examples from an alternative British tradition.

Stuart Hall shows that a clash between code and act is unnecessary in any analysis of particular circumstances. We do not need to stress the autonomy either of reader or of text. Basing his argument on Marx, Hall points out that we may abstract from the real in order to find relations and structures invisible in actual contexts. Thus, a movement between different levels of analysis will hold experience and structure in play at the same time. According to this aspect of the secular model then, we would need to look at what it is to be a learner in MK School as a question of individuals in dialogue with the different levels and traditions of history and culture in which texts are located (Hall, 1981). This would enable us to relate the experience of the individual to cultural codes and to find out which modes of literate activity were in play in a context and which could be justified as effective in that context.

Roy Bhaskar's work in philosophy shows how this dialogue operates (Silverman, 1985). Bhaskar's 'realist' philosophy recognises meaning in social life without denying social structures. Bhaskar suggests that social structures are real in the sense that they are partly independent of individuals and their perceptions. On the other hand, we cannot reduce society to groups and we must attend to the relations of groups and individuals. Bhaskar provides a version of sociological explanation which moves from people's experience to the social relations and processes which necessitate them.

Bhaskar amplifies the relations between code and act in three ways. First, people do not create society; it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Secondly, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform but which would not exist unless they did so. Thirdly, society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification) but it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism).

Language is one of Bhaskar's ensemble of structures, practices and conventions into which we are born. This does not mean that we are born into subjection to a higher authority because there may be multiple relations within discourse. In Bhaskar's model, social structures can be coercive, yet invisible and undetected.

In looking at the dialogue between code and act in the literary learners of Milton Keynes. we need to keep in sight shifting and complex usages on micro and macro levels and the dialectic between individual activity and coercive or enabling structures. For example, we will need to look at individual pupils' literate activities in the light of the new town context, pedagogic tradition and student subcultures, all with their codes and histories. I will need then to discover which codes are in operation in MK School, how they are interpreted, reproduced or changed by students; I need to look at language users in their relation with languages in school and at readers in their relation with texts. I will need to look at these cultural processes in context with that context's continuities and discontinuities.

Coward and Ellis refine this last aspect for us in their discussions of the lack of unity and coherence in cultural contexts.

Coward and Ellis's book (1977) is about using the model of language to establish a structuralism that does not depend on a transcendent truth. Language is, they argue, a relevant model because it is relativistic, socially constructed and to do with the way meanings are exchanged between people. In their view, a person has to live in a dialectic between individuality and the roles which already exist for them in the social world and the world-views of groups. People live in social worlds, they argue, just as words are used within systems of meaning which are processes open to change. Social worlds are also open to change although such changes may not be wholly or immediately visible. Generalisations such as 'the human mind' cover up people's relationship with their cultures, a relationship which may involve having ideas about your culture which can be shown to be unreliable.

According to Coward and Ellis's model, I suggest that we would expect to see in Milton Keynes not a simple model of dualities (individual/culture, reader/text) but a dialectic between a pre-existing slot in cultural patterns ('the pupil', 'the reader')

and individual activity and transformation. Within MK School we would expect to find a site where the practices of literacy are diverse, clashing and mutating through use with none being the sole model of literacy in any transcendent sense but only in the real sense of social power. If texts are read and written against and through languages, then the reading and writing of literacy learners in Milton Keynes will be done through and against the languages within that culture and the languages brought to it from outside. Texts are part of the social knowledge of the new town. They link the individual with the economic, political, ideological and linguistic interactions of Milton Keynes. This literate activity will take place within contradictions, irregularities, disjunctions and uneven developments.

Summary

I have argued that, according to the secular model of literacy in culture which I have derived from the work of Hall, Bhaskar and Coward and Ellis, the literacy learner is seen in dialogue with the codes of the culture. In studying literacy in MK School we need to look at all levels from the individual to the national, to trace the codes in operation and see how individuals confirm or mutate them in the actual context of the new town. We will need to expect dislocations and contradictions rather than a harmonious model. We will need to look at the way in which texts are used in this place and time and how, as languages of social knowledge, they clash or combine with the economic, the political, the ideological and the linguistic.

In the next section I will argue that when we look at a particular set of literacy practices in context within a social or documentary view of culture we will need to take into account another particular issue, which is power in culture.

The Issue of Power in a Theory of Literacy in Culture

Culture is never neutral. To describe literacy in MK School we need to look at both the structures and the actual lived practices, reading and writing, so as to make plain how these work. Then we can decide what aspects of literacy practices are influenced by literacy myths, literacy as ideal, the 'best' or as struggle. To see

literacy in terms of power is to look at the ways in which certain kinds of literacy may be promoted, resisted or arise in opposition. To see literacy as power I will refer to Gramsci's view of hegemony.

Hegemony means that certain social groups control power structures not by domination directly but by forcing their will on others by affiliating and assimilating them. Although hegemony appears to extend power to a greater number of the population it always supports the interests of the ruling-class. The school thus becomes neither a bourgeois nor a working-class institution but a site where class relations are shaped by the assimilation of students and teachers to dominant ideas, which would include dominant ideas of literacy (Gramsci, 1971).

In terms of schooled literacy, this means that 'standard practices in English, for example, the writing of prose, have to let in examples from popular culture or a current fad. In this way, there is a force field of relations in which there is constant accommodation of or opposition to other literacy practices from popular and working-class cultures. This force field will change over time. Working-class students are therefore never entering a 'pure' bourgeois ideology but always a compromised one which has incorporated some elements of different cultures but still leaves others 'outside'.

I am suggesting that Gramsci's model of a force field of shifting power relations and competing ideologies can apply to a study of literacy learners in context. The production of cultural knowledge, and therefore of literacy could be seen as '... a struggle over competing discourses, the history of which has been swathed in ambiguities and contradictions' (McLaren, 1988).

Foucault (1980) sees these force relations as being in constant change as the inmates and the staff of institutions, those designed on the model of Bentham's panopticon, contest for power or form alliances. The language of institutions will be part of these contests and affiliations.

In order to study MK School, we need to look at the uses of power, particularly with regard to language, within the micro-situations of the school day and within the physical spaces of the school, In their institutional role, if not always in their

personal relations, teachers are expected to control pupils, in and out of the classroom. Pupils, as individuals and in a group, resist the institutional 'gaze' that follows them round. Thus the psychology of interpersonal relations for learning and the institutional structures are often at odds in the power gap.

Youth Culture and the Use of Space, Time and Objects

In this section I will argue for a way in which the study of youth cultures can contribute to a theoretical view of literacy in the secondary school. I will draw on the work of the Birmingham School (Hall and Jefferson, 1976) which has developed the enterprise started by Williams with 'The Long Revolution' of studying cultures within the Marxist tradition. In their work on youth cultures in 'Resistance through Rituals', the authors make clear that they consider culture to be, as I have already argued, both structure and experience. They refer to Marx's idea that people make their own history but only in given circumstances.

The authors set youth cultures within class cultures which, through differences in wealth and power, stand in relations of dominance and subdominance to other cultures and offer people born into them destinies fitted to their ranking. For this reason, subcultures must be seen in terms of cultural power. The authors see subcultures as centred in certain 'focal concerns', some of which are permanent and some transitory. Examples of more permanent features are the cultures of delinquency and of the working-class adolescent male. Subcultures, the authors argue, project solutions to the problems of the parent culture which means that they necessarily have relationships with both the parent culture and the dominant culture. The term 'youth culture' then glosses over relations of class and different strata of youth, some of whom will enter a tight or coherent subculture and some of whom will not. Here is the core of the Birmingham School argument.

The local school, is a good example of a negotiated class institution where generations of working-class children, who have made ties of friendship and marriage, have come into contact with authority relations and experiences at variance with their local culture. MK School is such a local school with a tradition of serving the

working-class area of Wolverton which dates back 80 years. As I noted in Chapter Three, the advent of the new town introduced pupils from other contexts to the settled relationship between school and community mentioned above. The splitting and dislocation of working-class communities has meant that people bring with them the range of response and resistance they have learned elsewhere.

Working-class subcultures in the Birmingham School argument, are ways of winning back space and time for adolescents. They focus on key occasions, locations and concerns, adopt for their own purpose certain material objects and have an argot which classifies the world around them. For example, skinheads revived a symbolic working-class dress, asserted the 'imaginary' values of a class which their parents would now deny, represented a locality destroyed by planners and declared their allegiance to football, a game now commercialised and professionalised. Youth cultures, the authors argue, arise at the intersection between the parent culture and the mediating institutions of the dominant culture, such as the school. Members of subcultures rework their parents' forms of adaptation, negotiation and resistance to their own group life and generational experience, for example within school.

We should note here that subcultural uses of literacy may differ by gender, which is a factor not dealt with in the authors' argument above. The issue is however dealt with by McRobbie and Garber (1976) still within the CCCS group.

They see girls as active in 'secondary' areas, for example fan clubs and the home, because working-class sexual taboos deny them free access to the streets on their own. The move towards greater participation for girls in skinhead, mod and hippy cultures did not alter their restriction. Working-class girls have had an alternative network of responses and negotiations with the prospect of family and marriage almost always at the end. Girls' use of their rooms during the 'teenybopper' era of the 1970's was, they write, a culture based on commercial pop music, a culture where anyone could join in and where there was no risk of humiliation or verbal harassment by boys. If girls use space differently from boys because they need to negotiate areas of freedom within restriction then it is arguable that they are likely to use literacy differently from boys within subcultures.

Subcultures, Literacy and Boundaries

The French historian Philippe Ariès writes in his study of Western attitudes to death (1976) that our culture has repressed the pain and sorrow of death and that 'along with the interdiction appears the transgression'. The tragic, negative and violent aspects of human life have, arguably, been repressed or controlled in our dominant culture. Young people learn of the taboos and symbolic boundaries. Thus these taboo areas of culture become a resource on which to draw for resistance in subcultures, for example in the forms of video nasties, horror novels, pornography or hooliganism. As I noted in my pilot study, taboo topics within the school also become the subject matter of subcultural literacies.

Mary Douglas shows how 'Each culture has its risks and dangers.' Strongest among these is the transgression of social barriers (Douglas, 1970). It is ritual which controls this danger, separating and segregating the passenger and declaring their new status. Antisocial behaviour is thus the proper expression of the condition of the temporarily outcast, the outsider, and dirt, obscenity and lawlessness are symbolically relevant to the rites of exclusion. If it is true that '... everything we do is significant, nothing is without its conscious symbolic load' (p. 21), then individuals possess a sense of form which makes them aware of all these structures in their appropriate context. 'Pollution' can only occur where demarcations are clear. Douglas sums up: 'Any culture is a series of related structures which comprise social forms, values, cosmology, the whole of knowledge and through which all experience is mediated.' She does stress though that: 'any complex of symbols can take on a cultural life of its own and even acquire initiative in the development of social institutions' (p. 53). Society then is like a set of Chinese boxes, each with a sub-system having sub-systems of its own. Douglas notes that people think of their social environment as consisting of other people joined or separated by lines which must be respected. Some of the lines are protected by firm physical sanctions. But wherever the lines are precarious, pollution ideas come to their support. Physical crossing of the social barrier is treated as a dangerous pollution.

Douglas's account suggests that subcultural literacies may be ways to overturn the rigidities of formal literacies through the use of those powerful and dangerous areas which they reject. This transgression happens within the tight ritual of the school day and of the lesson in a classroom. She does not emphasise in her account those purposes of transgression which may have social and political consequences; such purposes might be the demand for an equal voice in a debate or the call to validate experience which is beyond the pale but which represents real experience. Such transgressions occur at levels of our culture which range from children's playground rhymes and graffiti to the European 'high' cultural tradition of transgression in Nietzsche, Sade, Lautréamont, Bataille and Artaud, for example in the written revelation of teenage sexual relationships. We are thus enabled to include in our consideration of literacies what goes beyond the pale, the areas of language that are taboo, because they are, I suggest, a source of the oppositional culture of school pupils.

Subcultures, Literacy and Subversion

Almost as soon as they learn the rules for behaviour, children begin to subvert them. This is specially true in two places. They delight in subverting language, for example with parodies of hymns and songs, and in stories which show adults in situations of discomfort. Zipes (1979) shows how fairy tales become part of the folk culture of subversion. Childrens books, for example Sendak's 'In the Night Kitchen', continue the tradition. Parody and excess are part of childrens' ways of both establishing and breaching the boundaries of sense and nonsense.

All of this is explained by Bakhtin (1988). Kristeva suggests that Bakhtin's concern is to 'overturn' the established order of one-way monologic dominance of the cultural forms so that they become imaginatively dialogic (Kristeva, 1980). The 'carnival' is part of the subculture of all childhoods.

In school, pupil resistances to school orthodoxies take many forms. Controlled studies of these in the United States, especially in the domain of literacy, have interesting implications for a study of MK School. (Shuman, 1983; Sola and Bennett,

1985; Gilmore, 1985; Hubbard, 1988; Carnetti, 1988). The studies of Sola and Bennett (1985), Shuman (1983), Gilmore (1983) and Hubbard (1988) are helpful in shaping my theoretical view of Milton Keynes.

Characteristically, these studies emphasise the contextualised literate practices of disaffected or ethnic minority students and demonstrate that they have literate competences which they apply with different purposes from official literacy within an alternative culture. Within this culture pupils use literacy in collaborative ways, open to all and in combination with speech, body language, and objects such as comics, magazines and personal stereos. They produce alternative forms, such as graffiti, parodies of 'official literacy', for the purposes of play, deception and 'speaking the unspeakable' (Shuman, 1983).

The alternative culture, which includes literacies, can be seen as a way for pupils to solve the contradictions of the school, which promises success but reproduces unequal opportunities. Within this paradox, students use alternative forms to find their own voices within a struggle for '... hegemony over the productive forms of consciousness-formation' (Sola and Bennett, 1985) and to negotiate alternative roles and social relationships to those implied by being 'pupils' (Gilmore, 1985). Yet even within the apparent openness of the alternative culture, they may find alternative hierarchies and gender divisions (Hubbard, 1988).

Summary of a Theory of Literacy in Culture which supports the Hypothesis

Culture and literacy are not autonomous or monologic things which have clear progress or unity or which act as containers only for the best of human achievements, (although myths about culture will still be in operation in a context such as MK School). Culture is a way to describe ways of life, which are complex dialogues, in which patterns or codes (global, national, ethnic, local, gendered or any permutation of these) are encountered and acted on by individuals and groups. Cultural processes may be characterised by the workings of power, control and hence exclusion, by gender divisions and by differentiated access to language, time,

materials, objects and spaces. As a result, descriptions of cultural processes must include the struggles of and between individuals or groups which involve strategies of subversion whose goal is the renegotiation of cultural boundaries and the achievement of a voice, of time, objects and space. Literacies, their texts, readers and writers, within a politics of language, are labyrinths of continuities and breaks, of codes and practices and the subject and object of dialogic encounters within cultures. All of this is 'a sense of people's complexity of relationship to the historical situations they inherit' (Steedman, 1986).

In that schools which are 'open' to influences that come from their situation in a community turn towards their community for part of the definition of their role, we might expect to find in MK School the elements of the social texture that are described in the theory of culture. My pilot study indicated that alternative literacies are in operation in MK School and my theory of culture demonstrates that such literacies occur where there is a clash over the meaning of culture with language as a major site for disagreement.

4.6. The Making of a Psychology

I now turn to my third area of educational enquiry which is psychology. Parents and teachers look to psychologists to explain what happens in schools. Therefore theories of literacy have one foot in psychology.

There are unexamined theories of psychology which trail through school. They frame methodology and, in particular, testing. For example, in the transition from feeder school to secondary school, students' past achievements in literacy may be summed up in the form of reading ages. When they arrive at secondary school, pupils may take reading tests which then provide the baseline for the statistical measurement of progress during their secondary school careers. The school may use this measurement , compare it with expected and actual GCSE results and produce a mathematical model of the 'value added' between years 8 and 11.

My contention in this section is that there are two models of the psychology of literacy which are current in schools and that these two provide only limited

explanations of literacy learning. The first is the *behaviourist* theory and the second is the *generative* theory.

Behaviourist Theories

Behaviourist theories of the psychology of literacy sit in a tradition of inquiry in which it is assumed that the researcher is objective and that people's literacy can be studied using the methods of the physical sciences. This tradition has been most influential in the forms which emanate from the work of Skinner and Watson. It has its philosophical roots in the tradition of empiricism associated with Hume in which knowledge is believed to come through the senses, especially perception. In the psychology of literacy, this approach is seen in ideas of measurement, standards, encoding and decoding, processing and skills.

A behaviouristic view of the psychology of literacy, paradoxically, sees the mind either as outside the bounds of science or as a mirror of what comes in from outside. Its origins in animal experimentation mean that literacy is seen as sets and sub-sets of skills which can be taught sequentially and then measured against a common standard by testing observable behaviour. Such an approach implies an emphasis on teacher control and transmission and the use of teaching systems, such as reading schemes, with graded steps. There is a stress on techniques and rules and on external signs of literate practice such as handwriting. It is assumed that everyone learns in the same way, or can do so given the right system. This allows the comparison of one pupil with another in terms of 'ability', 'intelligence', performance' and, as a result 'failure' for those who do less well within the set rules, texts and tests. As language is seen to come in from outside, it is possible 'not to have it' and therefore to need to be 'given it'. This deficit model lends itself to medical metaphors which are taken to be truths, such as dyslexia and the need for 'reading recovery'.

In schools, this approach puts an emphasis on writing above speech because the observable techniques and practices of the school are seen as the main criteria for what literacy is. Students' literate practices outside school and in their subcultures

can be discounted because they do not fit within the 'delivering', practising and testing processes of the school. Literacy thus comes to mean for teachers, and for parents and children, what you do at school. The process is circular because literacy then comes to serve the schooling process, what you need to be able to do to pass exams and tests. By putting this paradigm into practice, schools lay themselves open to being the sole cause of 'illiteracy' and more schooling with better techniques and systems is seen to be the answer. The reasons for learning to read and write become school-centred.

The inadequacies of the behaviourist theory of literacy are as follows: first, it is non--contextual. There is the assumption that skills can be isolated without reference to group, society, gender, language development, meaning or pleasure. There is the parallel assumption that there are 'standard' readers, and texts which can be measured for readability. Neither is placed culturally or historically. It becomes clear however that behaviourism is itself a form of context. Children learn literate behaviour in this framework and assume that this is what literacy is. In fact, the behavioural approach assures the cultural hegemony of teacher and politician and has its origin in the tradition of nineteenth century transmission teaching. Its explanatory principle is inadequate to cover anything outside its own confines and it fails to take account of literate practices learned outside school. Because the literacies of the learners in MK School fall outside the paradigm of school learning, behaviourist theories cannot explain them.

My second criticism is that by placing the 'mental' or the 'private' outside the realms of science, or by assuming that the outer is simply reflected inside, behaviourist theories cannot deal with evidence which comes outside these bounds. Behavioural theory may be a paradigm of natural science but science is not enough if it leaves out consciousness. There is no way in which a behavioural theory can explain development in the sense of a qualitative change in consciousness. There is no way in which it can encompass a process whereby what 'goes in' in terms of literacy 'comes out' differently and changes what is outside. Neither can language be taken into account as a resource of cultural and historical knowledge which has

in any way a separate existence from the stimuli and responses which behaviourists say constitute the learning process.

Generative Theories

Generative theories of the psychology of literacy sit in a tradition of inquiry which assumes that there is a logical pattern or system at the basis of human reason which can explain individual activities. This tradition in psychology is associated with Chomsky's psycholinguistics. It has its philosophical roots in Cartesian rationalism in which mind is associated with autonomous reason. In the psychology of literacy, this approach is seen in the work of Frank Smith and the Goodmans. It centres on the active search for meaning, cueing and miscueing, prediction and 'natural' development towards literacy.

A generative view of the psychology of literacy is more credible than a behavioural approach because it places an active learner within the whole range of his or her language experience. Literacy is seen to emerge in real contexts and social situations, within relationships with adults and with a social knowledge of purposes. The learner 'learns to mean' within a holistic environment of oral language, play, relationship and collaboration. He or she operates on language through prediction based on previous experience of syntax, semantics and context.

In school, generative literacy theory necessitates the provision of a wide range of language experiences for all. Varied literacy programmes have to have a wide range of functions in order to enable development. Such an approach in itself is a threat to transmission teaching, because it challenges teacher control, and a threat to testing and measurement because it assumes in the learner 'hidden' knowledge which is the basis for prediction of what a written text may mean.

Where generative theories are inadequate to explain the psychology of literacy is in their mystification of development. Just as Chomsky hypothesised a 'language acquisition device', so the development of literacy is seen as a Rousseauesque 'natural' growth by generative theorists, an outpouring of human potential. Theories which presume a natural development cannot encompass the whole lan-

guage context of a literacy learner because they do not explain how inner structures are formed and what their exact connection is with sociohistorical context. Neither can they take into account language as something material and separate from the 'inside'. In MK School, generative theories cannot explain the roles of pedagogy, the new town itself or the pupils' alternative culture in the development of pupils' literate practices.

The inadequacies of the behavioural and generative theories of the psychology of literacy need to be supplemented by a *sociocultural* psychology associated with the Russian School, and, in particular, the work of Vygotsky.

Sociocultural Theories of Psychology

Sociocultural theories of psychology are located in the tradition of enquiry in which individuals are seen in interaction with their social and cultural backgrounds. This tradition has its philosophical roots in dialectical materialism and in the work of Vico and Herder. In this tradition an alternative is provided to the split between a materialist scientific psychology and a philosophical idealist psychology such as rationalism (Vygotsky, 1986).

The Russian School of psychology embeds learning in thought and language in cultural and historical processes rooted in material history. Because it was grounded in Marxist--Leninism, it emphasised the positive improvement of people's ability to learn and to master reality within the transformation of society. The child is viewed as an active learner who internalises social signs to create new mental structures in a context where all activity is socially determined and mediated. Soviet psychology places speech in a derisive role in human mental development (Luria and Yudovich, 1971). Luria saw speech as accompanying and then replacing action, in-so-doing 'creating new forms of attention, of memory and imagination, of thought and action'. Innate abilities and the stimulus-response model were rejected in favour of a model in which organism and environment interact. Development is introduced into the study of mental processes through the interaction between elementary and higher mental functions. The social circumstances of the child as

learner become an explanatory principle. For me, much of the impact of this body of work is summed up in Bruner's comment: '... the second signal system was the world encoded in language: nature transformed by history and culture.' (Bruner, 1988).

Vygotsky's Work

There are seven areas of Vygotsky's work which are relevant to a theory of literacy. I summarise these below.

1. Vygotsky argues that there are specifically human functions in opposition to natural or biological ones and to elementary behavioural acts. Cultural development is not the same as natural development.

2. Consciousness is explained by social activity. It is built from the outside in relations with others.

3. Language is an abstract historical-cultural categorising system which the child uses to reorganise his or her mental field and go from the biological to the social. Social learning is thus a semiotic activity. It is to do with signs replacing the environment. Human higher mental functions are products of this mediated activity.

4. Speech is socially learned in culture and then internalised and itself becomes a higher mental function which undergoes development when it meets thought which comes from a different root. Development is a historical-cultural process with human laws, but, once internalised, different structural formations stimulate their own development and realisation into higher mental functions with specifically human social goals. Different functions interact as functional systems and, in the case of thought and speech, have different relations at different stages. Internalisation involves a kind of positioning or inner

audience on the road to mastery. Vygotsky writes that children 'learn to be the subject and object of their own behaviour' (1978). This happens when the interpersonal becomes the intrapersonal. Therefore being fully human is being able to produce one's own intentions and being able to master things consciously in a process which is thus powerful as well as distinctly human, historical and cultural.

5. School in Vygotsky's thought is where the child meets systematically organised learning which he calls scientific concepts. To this situation the child brings its 'spontaneous concepts' which are the learning which has emerged from the child's own reflections on its everyday experience. The development of knowledge and mastery comes, Vygotsky argues, when these two kinds of concepts meet in the educational *dialogue*, which occurs in the 'zone of proximal development' which is the gap between the child's and the adult's concepts and knowledge. From the dialogue and its solution the child internalises and masters knowledge.

6. In the development of language and thought, Vygotsky argued that social speech from the outside develops into 'egocentric speech' which is then internalised and becomes inner speech which is individualised verbal thought and dialogue, purely semantic and full of private associations. The source of social speech thus becomes important because different milieux will give inner speech different verbal shape. Inner speech also works outwards in that it produces new symbols and word senses which are put out into culture and which change it. Writing is, Vygotsky states 'a critical turning point in the entire cultural development of the child' (1978). The historical-material bases of writing are gesture, drawing and make-believe play which work in a unified but discontinuous process. Writing takes the child from 'maximally compact inner speech' to 'maximally detailed written speech'. The highest forms of the written language are then historically situated.

7. Vygotsky argues that play is a leading source of development (1978). Play is not simply pleasure because other things may be more pleasurable and because players can be losers. There is some pleasure in play, but also needs are fulfilled, incentives to act and affective aspirations are changed by each stage of development. As Fox (1988) points out, affect is thus central to play and it is voluntary submission to rules which gives pleasure.

Vygotsky sees abrupt advances to the next stages in play development and changes in motives and incentives to act. Play itself occurs first where unrealisable tendencies occur. Rather than having a tantrum or accepting a substitute, the child in play will enter an imaginary illusory world where desires can be realised. Imagination itself is, Vygotsky writes, a new, specifically human psychological process. It is internalised action like all functions of consciousness. Make-believe play is imagination when internalised (Britton, 1988). By adolescence, imagination is play without action.

Play arises not only in relation to feelings about specific phenomena, but also to generalised affective tendencies. The child generalises from separate affective reactions and plays without realising motives. Play is thus wish-fulfilment with generalised affective tendencies. It develops from an overt imaginary situation and covert rules to overt rules and a covert imaginary situation. Play thus involves the ability to act without situational constraint and independent of perceptions. Action in an imaginary situation is guided by meaning, by the fusion of vision and meaning, object and word.

Play is a transitional stage in the severing of meaning from object. An object is needed on which to hook the meaning, to effect the change. The properties of things are retained, but, as ideas, they can be inverted so that semantics dominates. The end point is when meaning can be acted on as if it were an object.

Ideas then involve pleasure, concepts become passions. Vygotsky writes that play gives a child a new form of desires i.e. teaching him or her to desire by relating his or her desires to a fictitious 'I', to his or her role in the game and its rules.

Play is thus by no means synonymous with leisure. As Vygotsky argues, the child in play does what he or she feels most like doing, but this means subordination to rules which conflict with spontaneity and involve great self-control. The carrying out of these internal rules is itself a pleasure. Play also provides a zone of proximal development because achievements in play today become the basic level of real action and morality tomorrow.

Implications of Vygotsky's Work for a Theory of the Psychology of Literacy

From the particular areas of Vygotsky's work detailed above I derive the following implications for a theory of the psychology of literacy.

1. The psychology of literate practices must be described in terms of contingent, human activities, that is activities which are socially, culturally and historically located.

2. The child learns in a sociocultural context. That is, he or she learns in practice sociocultural frameworks for making sense from media, parents, teachers and peers. Such frameworks need not be static but may be in a process of change. The child at the same time is developing concepts which mediate the extent of his or her understanding (Haste, 1987). Literate practices are then part of these frameworks and are therefore social. They are ways of joining a culture or, indeed, of differentiating oneself from it.

3. Literate practices are mediators. That is, they stand ready-made for the child to learn from while at the same time he or she is using them in the construction of concepts which include literate competences in social contexts. This implies that:

a) Different cultural groups with different versions of social experience will

mediate different literate practices in different ways, with different ways with words.

b) Language practices, which include literate ones, are always redolent with cultural and historical content; they are never neutral.

c) Texts are cultural and material objects. Different cultures which have texts treat them in different ways. Books, for example, are products of history and culture. The centrality of the book, its relation to truth and its intended audience are culturally relative, juxtaposed with other activities in everyday material life. Reading and writing are part of language learning in social relationships within cultures which may prioritise them in different ways and they, and their texts, become part of the individual's social knowledge.

d) Texts are dialogic, part of the interplay between individual and the 'voice' of the culture. They teach you to read them and you learn by engaging with them. Texts then are not isolated, they are part of the whole array of similar and dissimilar texts in social contexts. Reading and writing are thus *intertextual*. They take into account and use other texts and the competences necessary to read or write them.

e) Texts are thus not unmediated glimpses of autonomous truth for the reader-writer but need culturally and historically relative sets of competences applied to language, that is to sets of meanings constructed within particular cultural practices.

4. Literacy learning is an interactive development of mastery of textual practices. The literacy learner interacts dialogically with the support systems of adult, teacher, media or peer group within the zone of proximal development. Developments in literate practices are part of the construction of higher

psychological functions which are qualitatively different from previous ways of thinking.

5. The individual in his or her development of inner speech appropriates the 'voices' of the culture in order to construct an inner dialogue. Language which is internalised is never neutral but is imbued by the individual with thought, experience, emotion and physical feeling. In reading, the individual's social relationship to the text involves 'becoming the teller and the told', that is being able to take on, internally, the social roles of reader and author. In writing, the expression of inner meaning 're-enters' the public world and has to be adapted to common understandings.

6. In the special 'buffered' inner area of play, culture is learned through symbolic action in context. The child learns to sever meanings from objects and replace them with inner representations of the culture. The child learns to do this in practice, in dialogue with others and then with the self. Literate practices when approached as play enable the reader or writer to engage the inner world with rapt absorption and strong emotion. They enable him or her to manipulate symbols and to imitate or rearrange the world, perhaps transgressively.

Summary of a Theory of the Psychology of Literacy which supports the Hypothesis

I have argued that there are two theories of literacy learning applied in school which are not adequate to describe the range of the individual's literate practices. The behaviourist theory of the psychology of literacy is inadequate because it does not take into account context, consciousness or development and assumes standard readers, methodologies and texts. The generative theory is inadequate, despite its acknowledgement of language experience in context, because it assumes a natural universal pattern which generates literate development.

I then argued that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of psychology is a better

model for literacy learning because it describes the interaction of the individual with the sociocultural context. This enables us to explain the learning of literate practices through a dialogue with cultural context. It can include the growth of consciousness and concept development as historically located. It enables us to look at the child's inner world in that he or she internalises and can play with and transform sociocultural codes.

Recent work on '*sub-rosa*' discourse in schools, largely in America, shows students to have wider literacy than the narrow definitions of schools acknowledge. *Sub-rosa* discourse in adolescent cultures is plural, diverse and dialogic, parodying adult discourse, duplicating speech and writing and involving communal reading and writing. Literacy in school thus has a political dimension in which students create a voice to answer the contradiction between the overt and the covert aims of the school. But popular, non-canonical or vernacular literacy is part of a wider dialogue in which the individual strives to wrest his or her own meanings from the major discourses of a culture.

Implications for a Study of MK School

It is not possible to explain the psychology of literacy learners in MK School with reference only to official literacies. Individual literacy learners must be seen in relation to the history of literacy and education in Milton Keynes and to its history and current context as a new town (Chapters Two and Three). It is necessary to know the range of literate practices active in this sociocultural context. Attention then needs to be paid to what cultural knowledge and social relationships are contained in literate practices within the cultural framework of this new town and this school and what pupils actually do with these practices and with the texts which are part of them.

In their most powerful messages about what they do, teachers in schools cannot make invisible certain kinds of social and cultural knowledge and certain literate practices without having them recur where they do not want them to be. Thus the graffiti writer reclaims informal texts which imply dialogic relationships and writes

and reads them in inappropriate places. Neither can teachers ignore or make invisible the supported conceptual development which is part of literacy practices as cultural knowledge and emphasise only the decontextualised features of handwriting, spelling, grammar and layout without pupils finding elsewhere, at home or in peer-group cultures, the cultural knowledge which, internalised, allows the inner dialogue, the construction of their own voices and, in play, enables the symbolic overturning of the dominant culture.

4.7. Summary of Chapter Four

I have argued that to find a model of literacy in culture adequate to describe the experience of pupils in Milton Keynes, we must reject two of the strands of meaning of the word culture which we have inherited; these are culture as common progress and culture as the 'best'. I suggest that culture needs to be concerned with the actual spaces in which people may speak, listen, read and write and with the power relations which mean that some voices will be excluded or marginalised. I also argue that in seeing culture in its third meaning as pluralist, we need to resolve certain problems in the debate in English Studies between culturalism and structuralism.

My contention is that it is in a materialist theory of language in culture that this apparent dichotomy could be revealed as a unified theory. A materialist theory of texts would see them as positioned within the dialogue between the cultural and historical discourses in which they were produced and the cultural and historical position of the reader. A materialist theory of structure must always acknowledge this dialogue between codes and interpretations, although textural forms and codes, historically determined, always precede the reader or writer. In Gramsci's work, we find the possibility of describing any site of struggle such as the school, as a force field of contradictory pressures and tendencies, an area of negotiation, a mixture of dominant, subordinate and oppositional forms. In the school we are also dealing with an institutionalisation and technologisation of power and surveillance as described in Foucault's work. Such institutions always engender revolts

against the 'gaze' which take the form of cultural tactics and strategy. Meanwhile the school tries to transmit the 'master patterns' of one class and encounters the mismatch between its presentation of this monologism and the already established language codes of different social classes (Bourdieu, 1967). Educational discourse, like any other discourse, is located culturally within the distribution of power and privilege and delimits the positions of teacher and learner, and, as Halliday has shown, language use in school is actively connected with the social structure it represents (Halliday, 1978). We therefore have a view of literacy in culture, particularly in school as a conflict between subcultural and hegemonic discourses.

I then suggest that the proper field of literacy in culture is the whole spectrum of language use . If so, it needs to take into account 'mass' i.e. popular culture.

Popular literacy within popular culture can thus be seen both as a site of struggle and of *bricolage*. As such it joins a post-modern culture of deconstruction and reconstruction, of ironic replays of the 'game' without distinctions between high and low cultures. Popular literacy must also be seen in its contemporary interactions with other media and in its use within subcultures as a revolt against the sense of belonging functional literacy is supposed to give. Within popular culture it is necessary to take into account the themes of class as the struggle for space and property and also consumerism, race and gender.

Focusing on a material theory of learning literacy, I argue that the unity of body-mind is necessary to be able to describe accurately what happens when someone learns. I point to Soviet psychology as the field where descriptions of learning include the internalisation of activity within a social context and suggest that the internalisation of language involves the negotiation of positions in discourse on the road to mastery, including the adult lending of consciousness to the learner. But literacy learning also involves the private world of inner speech.

In Bakhtin's work we find a description of how the interaction between the subject and discourse can be viewed as a struggle to master codes in order to wrest from them one's own voice. The dialogic theory applied to texts, as seen for example in Meek (1988), opens up the way for a material theory of the text, in

which the 'mental' existence only of texts is discarded in favour of a secular theory in which texts are a presence in the world.

According to Walkerdine (1981), readers and writers learn discourses, that is signs in social practices. This process of learning throws doubt on the unity of the subject in the essentialist sense. The Lacanian subject is born into discourse which already contains positions and their relations; even to mean it is necessary to have gone through a process of splitting the subject in order for there to be something to express meaning about. The implication of a social theory of the subject is that subject positions, for example that of the ideal reader, may be projected in texts, particularly, perhaps, in schools.

The role of play in literacy learning is as internalised action which attaches desire to the pleasure of abiding by rules. Play is not light but can be deep and serious. Literacy is thus linked, in terms of pleasure in abiding by rules, to the emotions both pleasurable and horrific which are produced and are able to be produced by cultural forms.

4.8. Where the Argument Now Stands

Everyone who writes about literacy does so from within a historically situated perspective. We have a common history in literacy and different histories of our own reading and writing practices. It was on this premiss that I made critical analyses of the following areas in this thesis: my own history in literate practices, the history of literacy and schooling in the local area and Milton Keynes as a context for literacy and schooling. I argued for a theory of literacy, and therefore of language, in culture. I considered and rejected myths, produced alternatives and argued for the possibility of broadening the context of literacy into culture.

The 'Great Debate' about literacy has been a distraction. It keeps élitist social practices and behaviourist psychology as the answer to the educated problem of 'what will literacy be like?' (Meek, 1993). The Great Debate is part of a rearguard action by people in power who continue to uphold the rational modernising process of Western society, a process in which literacy is seen as a fixed, unchanging,

practical, measurable in its increase or decrease and a prime cause of social, political and historical events. Other post-modern voices however stress the plurality of cultures within a world of changing global technologies. Within societies with continuities and discontinuities, literate practices need to be seen as a range of competences, in which everyone is literate in some things and illiterate in others. Literacies are social and material practices within and indeed against cultures. People in cultures use and master texts within a wide range of reading and writing events and language uses. In contrast with autonomous theories of literacy which exclude certain practices, literacy events do not submit to a definition so much as to an *inclusion*, a 'counting in' (Meek op. cit.). What needs to be included is the gamut of people's literate uses and purposes in their different material situations which affect life-chances, time, space, gender, ethnicity, work, energy, and ideas of public and private. Literate practices come to learners already embedded in institutions and with ready-made ideological, political and cultural significances. Literate uses and purposes depend on a social knowledge which includes cues. opening metaphors. styles and registers. Such practices have roles in socialisation into cultures. They are part of the social-semiotic activities through which people reproduce or change the deep and surface structures of their cultural codes. As part of language practices, literate practices can comment on or treat as implicit these same cultural codes. When people meet others with different practices, they may have to adapt, relearn or change their own.

Where literate practices support people's world views, their 'home-made models' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), then their competences or social knowledge are affected by deeper attitudes, priorities and ideas about language. Thus taught literate activities cannot be effective unless they fit into a way of knowing, of placing in experience, of making world views. As such, they can be read by the researcher as texts alongside the other sign systems in a culture.

Although it is not possible to make universal claims about the moral effect of literacies, because of their continuities and discontinuities in different cultures, they should not be trivialised. One use of literacies is to name experience and to give

others a vocabulary for doing this, to show others different world-views. Writers may bring their inner world into the outer world ; they may struggle for a voice and a mastery of material to do so but the successful sheltering of and giving form to experience can reintegrate past and present, can liberate the writer and reader by enabling the past to be seen politically, that is as an explanation of what happened and as a way to change what may happen.

Although the psychological effects of literate practices divorced from meaning or culture are minimal (Scribner and Cole, 1988), as part of human language use they are processes of making and doing in which mind and body are one. Speech is a precondition for literate uses but oral and written traditions will then interact and condition each other. Literate activities have their own traditions and continuities, 'learning one's letters', just as oracy does.

Schooled literacy, the instruction of the masses, has always been constrained by the views of those whose own selective different literacies are threatened by critical literacy in the many and who legalise their own views of what the masses should be instructed in (Meek, 1993). Literacies are thus interwoven with power and the practices of those with less power are equally valid for study. This conception of literacies contrasts with that which predominates among teachers and politicians, which is that schooled literacy gives the standard by which to measure ability, respectability and success. Although ideological literate practices are included in teachers' everyday work, the problem is literacy's defined purpose in schooling. People are more literate, have been more literate and use literacies in more ways than have been credited by the criteria of mass schooling. The educator knows that literacies have a role in socialisation into class cultures but that pupils' literacies, official and unofficial, become part of a cultural tactics in which pupils want to assert what they can do in ways which are not recognised by official criteria. Whatever the views of teachers and pupils, what works in a school will depend on factors such as trust, respect and active creation, that is teaching and learning within a relationship, and not on 'delivery' or other performance indicators. It is only by looking at learners in their cultural contexts that we will be able to know where

literacies are helping them, where they are failing them and where they fit into their worlds.

We must then turn to a 'cultural literacy', a term which even though current is already in dispute in the United States (McLaren, 1988). Theorists in America, McLaren writes, are starting '... to acknowledge the difficulty in separating cultural literacy from reading and writing in general. In fact, some argue that reading and writing are relatively futile and empty exercises unless accompanied by some form of cultural knowledge.' McLaren thus makes the distinction between Illich's 'scribal literacy' – the ability to read and write – and 'lay literacy' – the set of pervasive competencies and cultural knowledge required to participate in literate society. He quotes Brice Heath:

'Unless accompanied with cultural knowledge, personal drive, political motivation, or economic opportunity, literacy does not lead the writer to make the essential leap from literacy to being literate – from knowing what the words say to understanding what they mean. Readers make meaning by linking the symbols on the page with real-world knowledge and then considering what the text means for generating new ideas and actions not explicitly written or said in the text. The transformation of literacy skills into literate behaviours and ways of thinking depends on a community of talkers who make the text mean something. For most of history, such literate communities have been élite groups, holding themselves and their knowledge and power apart from the masses' (p. 215)

Within schools, pupils form a community of talkers, readers and writers which appropriates texts and uses them in ways different from the ways of official literacy. Pupils ignore 'correct' uses in the company of their peers. They collude with school as a way forward but retain a critical irony. Literacies are diverse and different, competing for space and acknowledgement and this is true of unofficial literacies in schools. Pupils' needs are met by the media outside school but they also want to work to create new literacies for their own purposes which may not be serious

but which may yet still prove to be part of a search for truths. Unofficial literacies have their traditions and their innovations, their trivial and their serious sides.

Pupils who feel excluded from the right 'club' of literates, the one which, in the mainstream, credits you and defines you as a success, make it part of their active, creative literate purposes to gather 'alternative' clubs with alternative uses and goals, alternative forms, even 'anti-literacies' (where 'literacy' is official literacy) (Halliday, 1978). But who is to say that mainstream literates will not let their skills lapse while the diverse alternative readers and writers may not become blasé about the power of their practised literacies?

One further dimension of my position is that the thrust of my writing is necessarily ethical. The priority of my writing is one of anger at injustice and the search for the reasons for that injustice. As such my writing is the result and part of the process whereby I encounter, as an educator and practitioner, the pupils in the school.

My encounters with the Other, the children of Milton Keynes, exceed my capacities to know and my ability to represent. In this situation, I have a responsibility therefore to try to understand and represent my pupils precisely because of their Otherness. I hope, through this understanding, to be able to say what we, as educators, should be able to do for them as part of a relationship between people, that is qualitatively and not 'objectively'. I therefore use my experience as teacher-researcher as a valid form of evidence and knowledge (Richmond, 1989).

Chapter Five: Critical Ethnography as a Research Paradigm

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I claim that critical ethnography is the research paradigm most suited to my study of literacy learners in MK School. My argument thus far has been based on my situated perspective as a teacher and as someone who lives in Milton Keynes and the relation of that perspective to the literacy learners and teachers in MK School in their own situated perspectives. I therefore need a research method for the empirical study of literacy in MK School which will allow me to describe, analyse and theorise from these perspectives in terms of wider codes and explanations of literacy learning, cultural content and psychology. This means that I need a qualitative rather than a quantitative methodology because I am looking at intersubjectivity in a social and cultural context. The qualitative approaches available in the social sciences come from the traditions of anthropology and sociology (Jary and Jary, 1991).

According to Bennett (1986) a qualitative sociological model for the study of literacy in context, for example in the work of J. J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, involves looking at social interaction in the form of speech events in particular situations. Gumperz and Hymes underpin this interaction with the notion of speech communities, that is the values and patterns shared by a group of people. Bennett is referring to Gumperz's work of 1971–1982 and Hymes's of 1964. Bennett remarks that this model is inadequate because it is unable to include larger social forces '… such as national and international political struggles, worldwide shifts in investment and capital, mass migrations of people looking for jobs etc. …' whose relationships with local interactions must be included in the description of social context if it is to explain adequately the context of literacies. Bennett points out that an emphasis on sharing is misleading because it ignores the role of contradiction and conflict and can portray those who do not share as failures. It also leads to an emphasis on the inheritance of rigid patterns of thinking and behaviour without

considering the creative roles of group members.

My argument thus far echoes Bennett's in that I have shown that I need a model which can include conflicts as well as stabilities in the making of literacies as well as their reception or delivery. I need an approach which allows me to move from the atypical to the structural and from description to explanation, that is, I need to link a description of individual pupils to their cultural context. I need to be able to describe any contradictions in participants' views, for example, I need to see how much pupils have absorbed the precepts of schooled literacy. I need to describe the cultural politics of MK School because they have implications for pedagogic practice, for example, I need to see how the skills of graffiti writers might be somehow 'given shelter' by the school.

What is needed then is a critical ethnography. Brodkey, who has defined such an ethnography, writes:

'I am presuming that educational anthropologists ... are interested in grounding their research in a theory of social construction because they wish not only to describe and analyse social practices but to interrupt those social practices they believe oppress certain designated classes inside educational institutions ...' (Brodkey, 1987 p. 6).

What then is ethnography, and why is it preferable to the other anthropological approaches, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology? Ethnography is, within *social anthropology*, the direct observation and written description of a group. it involves participant observation in which the researcher gathers data by living and working in the social setting at the same time keeping careful records (Jary and Jary, 1991). Symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are both approaches within *sociology*. The former seeks to explain action and interaction as the outcome of the meanings which actors attach to things and to social action. Thus meanings do not reside in objects but emerge from social processes. The latter sets out to uncover the methods and social competences which people use to

construct social reality. Both focus on micro-situations.

The ethnographer's task is to describe the culture in which he or she is a participant observer, its events, behaviours, artefacts, institutions and processes. Since cultures can be seen as 'webs of significance' (Geertz, 1993a) the ethnographer needs to make a thick description of a culture, which includes the most elementary, microscopic details. In my thick description of MK School I include such items as graffiti which would be ignored by 'common sense' criteria of importance and triviality. The ethnographer necessarily interprets the social text. Geertz even calls ethnographic analyses fictional in the sense of 'something made'. Such analyses are in fact ethnographer's descriptions of participants' descriptions of their own culture. Written ethnographic descriptions fix transient events and enable ethnographers to sort out what, as Geertz puts it, is 'getting said' in cultures without reducing events to absolute formal order.

A critical ethnography has four characteristics:

1. The researcher progresses from a description to theory and treats his or her own assumptions and those of the participants critically.
2. The researcher takes part in the daily life of the culture and his or her own activities are part of the description.
3. The researcher tries to reconstruct the social knowledge of the actors in context.
4. Ethnography opens on to the projects of other disciplines.

I will now look more closely at these characteristics.

The ethnographers's task is to read the culture he or she inhabits, its texts, its people, its artefacts and its institutions. If the resulting description is as full as possible it will include items in my situation such as graffiti, which would be ignored by 'common sense' criteria of importance and triviality. What is achieved by looking at all texts including school settings as well as lesson texts without omission is 'perspective by incongruity' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The mass of social

texts will reveal factors such as power and access in a culture. Texts may not be open and equal; they may be set within systems of property and of taboo. A grasp of the underlying system of what may be read and written and in what circumstances will show the context in which individual readers and writers act.

Anticipated by Lévi-Strauss, Shirley Brice Heath has brought home to English-speaking ethnographers the possibility of looking at the fixed terms of Western cultures in terms of relativism. The fixed terms I have mentioned I take to be part of a metaphysical tradition in which there is assumed to be a fixed eternal and unchanging truth or being which is believed to be identical with some aspect of the human mind. If this assumption is made, it is, as a consequence, assumed that we all are or should be in the process of becoming the same. Alternative ways of living are seen as deviations or illusions. Brice Heath however shows differences existing alongside the continuities of a mainstream culture in such areas as child-rearing practices, work, status, role, gender, clothing, etiquette, orality and literacy. The implication for ethnographers is that they must define themselves relatively against the subjects of their research, that, however thick the description, the ethnographer's situated perspective must be taken into account. The result may be an insecurity which results from the need to accept plurality of ways of life and our own relative status in our relations with the observed. This insecurity can however lead us as ethnographers to analyse the meanings of the continuities and differences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The positive aspect of this kind of analysis is that the ethnographer can no longer abrogate responsibility for what is said on to a supposed 'objective' viewpoint. He or she must take responsibility for what emerges and accept alternative viewpoints. A cultural and intellectual modesty must be exercised. All cannot be known and knowledge must be taken from those who know, not only from the powerful.

If there is no fixed viewpoint then every situation studied by the ethnographer may yield continuities and differences, sameness and atypicality. The lived particularity of individuals must be described. In this sense, ethnography describes what is 'local', that is what seems particular about places where people live and work and

those people themselves; something that cannot necessarily be described easily, something beyond but in dialogue with social and historical power structures, something which is to do with what Raymond Williams called the 'structure of feeling' of a place, which makes a place what it is and includes the self-making of the people there.

Ethnographic studies have tended to focus on non-Western cultures and this has continued within the ethnography of literacy with Street on Iran. Shuman's work on Puerto Ricans and Brice Heath's on Roadville and Trackton focus on minority cultures within mainstream cultures, Brice Heath's work however also points to the possibility of looking at the sites where the majority culture is delivered and seeing if there is also diversity there. There is the possibility that behind apparent universalism, locality continues as a strand not only because of particular histories but, in the case of Milton Keynes, a newly created city, in the form of intended modernity.

5.2. Ethnography and Pluralism

It is arguable that ethnography is a way of knowing and seeing which forms part of broader contemporary currents of thought whose main thrust is that they question the centrality of one single way of regarding the world. These currents should be seen, for example, against the spread of AIDS, the loss of faith in science and technology as a way to solve the world's ills and the fundamentalist and liberation movements of the post--colonial era (Godzich, 1986). All of the trends in the list above might induce us to define ourselves *relatively* against other human beings and to place ourselves among the *plurality* of forms of life on our planet. Ethnography would then not be an insignificant or isolated academic method or a reified and depoliticised 'discipline' but one of a range of *post-modern* cultural forms which range from academic studies such as *histoires des mentalités* to pop videos and which make diversity as significant as similarity. Ethnography would be a post-modern exercise if it looked at the universalising assumptions behind Milton Keynes' modernity and found relativism. pluralism and disjunction. A hypothesis

about Milton Keynes would be that local knowledge would be based on forms of rootlessness and on the clash between the old and the new, in our case with reference to literacies. Difference within the modern might not only tell us about relativism and pluralism within apparent uniformity, it might also tell us about the threats to that notion, again, in our case, within literacies.

5.3. Ethnography and the Self

Ethnography is democratic in method and practice with origins in the daily activities of ordinary people. As such it potentially restores power to the subject by showing knowledge to be social and cultural praxis and not a possession of the few. It thus links philosophically with the hermeneutic tradition which sees no separation between mind and body but sees only action, thus restoring totality to the subject. It corresponds also to some post-structuralist ideas where the search for knowledge leads not 'inside' a subject but to the manipulation of materials in action where the fixed subject is questioned.

A danger of ethnographic descriptions is that they can make light of Otherness and become a kind of shallow travel writing which is subjective but not self-analytical, that is reflexive. In the case of accounts of cultures in Western countries, the observer might also share the alienation and self-division of the observed.

It is here also that ethnography opens out onto feminist criticism where there is a tradition of self-questioning and self analysis as a form of political investigation. Rich (1986) in her discussion of the work of Gloria T. Hall describes how feminist criticism takes as axiomatic that a proper scholarly stance is engaged not objective; that the personal is the political; that description must be accompanied by analysis; that a politically critical stance is essential; that being principled requires a rigorous truthfulness and 'telling it all'; that research and criticism are not intellectual or academic games but pursuits with a social meaning rooted in the real world. Any 'universal' view, Rich remarks, is likely to be white, male, middle-class and supremacist.

Thus the ethnographer may write from a conviction that cultural differences,

pluralism and the abandonment of an essential truth entitle him or her to look to diverse and democratically pluralist sources . The ethnographer is exercising a cultural and intellectual modesty. All cannot be known and knowledge must be taken from those who know, not only from the hegemony of the institutional or professional discourse.

The subjectivity of ethnography denies that positivist objectivity which can be seen in feminist terms:

'At its most discreet, masculinity tries to be invisible, to become the "he" of grammar, the "man" of mankind, the impersonal voice with all the answers ... the impartial judge who can define the truth at the end of the trial, the knower of objective knowledge.' Patricia Holland (New Socialist, Sept./Oct. 1983).

5.4. Ethnography and Text

Ethnography also shares with post-structuralism and post-modernism, because of the juxtaposition of texts, the idea of intertextuality, the relative dependence of one text on another with no point of origin. Because of the relative position of the ethnographer and his or her participation in the scene, intertextuality can lead to the argument that there is no distinct entity called a 'discipline' within which evidence can be presented because disciplines themselves borrow from each other in the form of changing metaphors or analogies. Geertz (1993b) sees this 'genre destabilisation' as a new democratic mapping of thought, a way of ordering texts practically and relationally. He connects this change with the semiological insight that the social world is organised in terms of symbols. The ethnographer's task then is to execute 'symbolic unpackaging of the conceptual world', to discover how people make sense to themselves and then to see what this reveals about the wider issues of social order, historical understanding and psychic functioning.

The practice of research requires an apprenticeship to the disciplines, but as Bakhtin has written:

'One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible.' (1988)

The disciplines are, as Bakhtin says of literary genres, composed of certain features of language knit together with points of view, approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents. They differ in vocabulary, in forms for manifesting intentions and for making conceptualisation and evaluation concrete .

The methods of inquiry that we call the disciplines – psychology, history, anthropology, sociology, psycholinguistics, linguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnography – are all uses of language and are, as Bahkhtin says, 'social throughout.' They are only unitary when artificially abstracted from their real context where they are institutionalised in social tasks, expressed in social ways and places, exist at any moment as a cumulation of the struggles of their history and are subject to sweeping change.

The ethnographer, entering these realms of stratification and heteroglossia, finds languages which are, as Bakhtin continues, subject to juxtaposition, to supplementing each other, to dialogical contradiction or interrelation in the consciousness of real people.

The dialogic task of the researcher is to find those languages which he or she can expropriate to produce his or her 'own word' and newer ways to mean. The ethnographer is thus in the same position as any user of a language, faced with finding 'one's own word' in dialogue with this heteroglossia, this accumulation of points of view of the world. We must then think of ethnography as *open*, as receptive to experiences of the researcher which might normally not be accepted. Ethnography lets into description more than just 'what happens', more than just the apparent evidence. I will also take this kind of care in my empirical study of MK School. What will come out will not necessarily be simply statistics and straightforward interviews.

5.5. Summary

I have argued that in practising critical ethnography I will need to take the following into consideration when accumulating and analysing data about MK School:

1. Otherness and difference as well as sameness within a majority culture, strangeness as a method of analysis.
2. My own reflexivity and my own self-division as part of a relational picture of literacy learning in MK School.
3. Literacy within a thick description of communicative and other events.
4. The understandings of participants not only as pure data but as the object of critical interrogations within power relations, a suspicion of common sense.
5. Context as a process and knowledge as a practice not as something static.
6. The significance of all data whatever their apparent value in hierarchies of importance and triviality.
7. Context as a description of both atypical and structural principles.
8. Rootlessness and fragmentation as the structure of feeling of a new town.
9. The need to juxtapose different disciplines in order to make an adequate description of the educational context of MK School.

5.6. How I Carried Out the Research

My pilot study (Chapter Four) was my first attempt to apply my emerging understandings to examples of popular literacy in MK School. It was necessary now to re-examine those understandings in the light of a fuller picture of the school and its literacies both official and unofficial.

The cross-disciplinary nature of my pilot study provided a way to carry out this investigation, that is ethnographically, as I have explained in the previous section. My study of graffiti showed me learning. It demonstrates the kind of ethnography I have discussed, the kind in which the implicated observer learns while participating. I thus needed a method to allow me to collect evidence admitting of diversity.

My method and intention in my research then was to describe students' percep-

tions of literacy and literate activities, to reveal the cultural forms of literacy implied, and to show how the social structures condition and are sustained, or challenged, by their reproductions of literate activity. I thought that it would be a guiding principle not to expect consistency of self-presentation in a situation where students were continually operating cultural tactics and strategies of resistance. I needed to know the *range* of possibly contradictory subject positions available to students. Among these positions I was interested particularly in those which enabled students to be readers and writers. It appeared to me that as educators we offer students certain kinds of knowledge. They appear however to want different, or additional, kinds of knowledge, or a different range of 'really useful knowledge' (Johnson, 1979). What they cannot find in what we offer them they look for elsewhere, particularly in their subculture. I had to include this among the range of rhetorics at their command.

Up to this point, evidence came from my own knowledge as a participant observer and my transcription of graffiti from desks. My task then was to triangulate this evidence of literate practices with further points of view from students themselves. In addition I wanted to extend to its fullest my own role, in order to produce a thick description of the school environment and to collect as many other relevant artefacts as I could.

Silverman argues that triangulation is not a way of showing that multiple research methods used in a variety of settings will give access to a total picture or master reality (Silverman, 1985 p. 21). Each setting must be understood in its own terms. Nevertheless, triangulation serves as 'an assembly of reminders about the situated character of action' (ibid. p. 105). Multiple accounts each have sense in the context in which they arise.

It seemed to me then that the ordering of the evidence was important. Each set of situated perspectives would be triangulated against the last to see what else could be revealed and what each different kind of setting showed and did not show. At the same time, the results of this research would in their turn direct my theoretical thinking as my theoretical thinking would illuminate the evidence.

Bechhofer supports this: 'The research process ... is not a clear-cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time' (quoted in Burgess, 1985 p. 7).

I will explain in detail as I come to each kind of evidence how I carried out the research. I will note here however that the illuminating sequence for the triangulation of this work was:

a) my own total view of the school and the kinds of literacy at work there
b) questionnaires to students
c) individual interviews with students
d) my overview of the unofficial literacy of students in their subculture.

Over the course of seven years, I set out to collect the following kinds of data:

a) questionnaires administered to three classes
b) taped interviews with six students
c) my own notes kept in notebooks
d) the reading diaries of six students
e) artefacts, such as school policy documents
f) examples of students' informal literacy in addition to those collected during my pilot study of graffiti. These included additional graffiti from tables, walls and doors, notes passed in class and students' rough books.

I refer the reader to pages 277–279 for a detailed explanation of the rationale behind the choice of these techniques. Here I will say that I sought to use methods which have some cogency and credibility in ethnography. In order to test my hypothesis, I required as wide a picture as possible of literacy within the cultures of the school both at a collective and an individual level; together with my own perspective as an implicated observer. I needed to enquire what literate activities students engaged in outside school in order to track the continuities and differences which occur in schooled literacy and in students' informal literacies.

Chapter Six. MK School – Official and Unofficial Literacies

6.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed the methodology for my empirical investigation of MK School. In this chapter, I describe and analyse my findings. The chapter falls into two major sections: official and unofficial literacies. In the first section, I look at two styles of literacy in MK School which I argue are in conflict. I then describe my trawl for information about students' literate practices and discuss case studies of six students. I then describe and analyse unofficial literacy in the school to argue that the school is not engaging the full range of its pupils' literacies.

6.2. Official Literacy

The School Context

MK School is a comprehensive school of 1800 students aged 12–19. It has 14 form entry and, according to 1991 figures, is the seventh largest school in the country. It lies in the north-west corner of the new town of Milton Keynes. The large and varied catchment area includes the new town itself, older towns within it and outlying villages on its boundaries. The school was formed in 1968 from the amalgamation of a grammar/technical school and three county secondary schools. In 1981, an additional hall was opened which now accommodates about 700 students. Although the idea of one school is actively promoted by the headteacher, the two sites are about 5 minutes walk apart; differences in style and emphasis have arisen. The school has a teaching staff of 108 and is organised in departments for the curriculum and in houses for pastoral care.

After joining the school in 1982, I taught in the new hall for 8 years before moving to the older hall in 1991. Most of the evidence in this chapter was collected in the new hall. Inside, this hall is built on a rational plan. There are five colour-coded courtyards, with classrooms arranged around each courtyard. There is a staffroom and offices, a sports hall, the school library, and a drama and assembly hall. There

is a long low central corridor which runs straight from one end of the building to the other and whose constrictedness becomes evident at times of the greatest student movement. During the writing of this thesis, I taught largely in the rooms of the Modern Languages area which are arranged around the green courtyard. This was where the evidence for my pilot study of graffiti was gathered, in an old language laboratory since removed, The other hall is evidently an older style of architecture. There is a four storey tower block with white panels below each window which must resemble thousands of other schools around the country built in the late sixties. Around this block is a rambling series of one storey and two storey buildings, including a sixth form block, sports hall, gym and assembly hall. With cover lessons, exams and my eventual move to the other hall I have become familiar with most of the school and have observed literate practices in most parts of it. This is the physical space in which, from day to day, I have seen literacy in use. The graffiti I wrote about were literally inscribed on the buildings and furniture. It is in this space that we might expect to find the beginnings of the new literacy of a new town, but, as the graffiti remind us, there may be more than one literacy in school and literacies may be in conflict (Hodges, 1988).

First, I focus on those patterns and instances of literate behaviour in MK School which seem to have things in common, a group of activities which I initially call traditional literacy.

Traditional Literacy

Traditional literacy in MK School has its roots in and is a residual part of the school's history as a grammar school and is particularly related to exam success. Locally, MK School has a reputation for upholding academic standards and traditional practices and values for those prepared to make the effort. For example, it is the only state secondary school in Milton Keynes to retain a full uniform for pupils with the support of governors and parents. Within an environment which promotes the progressive and the new, it stands, to a greater extent than other Milton Keynes schools, for models, structures and patterns of education of 20

years ago or more. Setting of pupils at levels of perceived ability is encouraged; attention is paid to monitoring the progress of potential A, B and C candidates at GCSE and to putting them with 'key' teachers. The pastoral system is for operating sanctions, punishments and for controlling behaviour. The way to demonstrate achievement is in certain literate practices and forms of accepted behaviour.

The most public form of traditional social behaviour is visible in assemblies. The spoken notices and addresses in assemblies characterise the reading and writing environment. There, assumptions about common understandings and assumptions become evident. These understandings and assumptions are recorded in some of the school's literate practices. While present at such assemblies as a form tutor, I took notes on addresses by the Head, the deputies and the Senior Teachers and their assistants, the themes of which were as follows: School is a challenge we must face even if unwillingly. We must try hard, use our time wisely, enjoy our time at school but endeavour to win through. Effort is individual, even though we belong to a team like a football team. We are in a competitive situation and must raise ourselves through our own efforts. Competition is the way the world runs, in school we compete with others and ourselves. There is behaviour which is unsporting and lets the team down. As competitors, students should be 'bright attractive packages' for colleges and employers. Punctuality, dress and alertness are part of this package and will tell an employer that you have been 'schooled'. School uniform is part of this process. It cultivates team spirit, smartness and preparation to meet employers.

This ethos is based on and is maintained by standardised behaviour and a conformist attitude in pupils and staff. It is an ethos of hard work, individual effort, competition within a team with rules and the presentation of the external aspects of self as evidence of schooling and conformity.

Within the framework of this ethos, the achievement of standards is assumed to be demonstrated by certain performance indicators, particularly examination results and social conformity. Invariably at an initial staff meeting in September, the Head comments on these. In 1986, I listed the following topics of the staff meeting

agenda in order, assuming that they demonstrate priorities: 'bloody awful' exam results, social order, crime prevention, buildings and equipment.

The first site for the conservation of the traditional style is where staff come together. In meetings and conversations, members of the schools staff adopt a position with regard to the 'common sense' view of the traditional style (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). The connection made between performance and social order is perpetuated as staff debate how they can improve both. One way is to increase their surveillance of what pupils produce and how they behave. Staff may themselves be under surveillance by other staff to see if they are reinforcing the rules. Surveillance legitimises a teaching philosophy and a paradigm of daily work. The only problem may be that it obviates the need for reflection on one's practice (Foucault, 1980). Both students and staff have to carry out their everyday activities in the knowledge that surveillance is being practised. They develop strategies to negotiate some freedom within surveillance. Some examples of these are joke and parody, personal relationships, absenting oneself and pure defiance. On the other hand, students also judge staff on their ability to enforce the rules and to keep them, the pupils, under total surveillance. They thus accept surveillance and the values it implies while at the same time rebelling against it.

The School Ethos as a Setting for Traditional Literacy

The ethos outlined above includes literacy as part of the technical aspects of students' behaviour. Schooled literacy has technical features which are to be demonstrated by obedience to rules: spelling, punctuation, grammar, written accuracy, aspects of presentation and the correct use of text and exercise books. Literate practices belong in some places and not in others, They should be done at some times and not at others and pupils are put under surveillance to ensure that this is so. Because of these technical priorities, I intend to rename the traditional literacy of the school *technical* literacy since its priority is not to question how literacy is learned or what its value is, but to require its external demonstration as part of a wider culture.

The Literate Environment

The second site for the conservation of technical literacy is in documents and other materials. The presentational aspects of MK School and the literate systems used to administer them have largely foregrounded the technical style. Official literacy in the school is based to a large degree on the status of the written or printed word, and then on its interface with oral communications.

Secondary schools in Milton Keynes are now in competition with each other as a result of the Education Reform Act of 1988. MK School has appointed a school publicist whose tasks include the placing of features in local newspapers. One of the school's priorities has become to promote and market the school within the new town and to intensify the image of the school within the community. This is done by producing texts of various kinds. Thus a school magazine is distributed to all students, staff and parents and is available free in the local area, for example in libraries. It consists of short articles explaining school policies, recounting events and achievements and requesting funds and advertisements. There are also requests for sponsorship. The tone of the magazine is the confident presentation of the school to the community. In the staffroom, cynical jokes about which school gets the most publicity and why accompany this publication.

A market philosophy of literacy finds its way back to the students. For example, an assistant Head of House, in promoting his idea of a House newspaper, put it to students as a form of competition with another House which already had a newspaper and which was thus ahead in computer technology. Proposals for the contents of the newspaper were not discussed. The speaker's introduction to his topic was to ask students whether they read the 'Sun'. No other newspaper was mentioned. Thus the cultural assumption was that, to appeal to students, a member of staff has to presume a homogeneous populism and the lowest common denominator of reading outside school.

Within the school, there is a display committee which mounts students art work beautifully and places it prominently in entrance halls. The further away you go from the spaces where the public might come, the blanker the walls become.

Although it is interesting and rewarding to see students' work, the school not the student appears to own it.

Literacy thus supports overt display with the approval of a judging community. The presentation of a high degree of literacy is respectable. Most of the public service notices in the corridor represent respectable agencies such as the police, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and RNIB.

The students opinions about which outside agencies they wish to patronise is sought in years 8–11 only in the case of House charities, and these are vetted by staff. In the sixth form there is thus little formal support for organisations chosen by students themselves. When they occur, forms of student-led organisation are regarded with concern and are discouraged by staff. For example, a sixth form initiative to set up an Amnesty International group in the school was initially refused by the Head of sixth form and, even when he relented, was not met with widespread support. The formation of a School Council to encourage a form of student democracy lost impetus after a year. No evidence of large-scale student involvement has been evident and no controversial issues have been taken up by the council on behalf of the students. Thus public monologue rather than public dialogue is encouraged. Within an ethos which emphasises the technical style, including literacy, students are discouraged from experimenting with their social roles and from having the chance to try and fail by staff who abide by views of respectability and correctness. Students' rights of response are limited and staff may punish them if they reply out of turn.

I now set out below a thick description of the kinds of literacy required of the staff of MK School.

Staff Literacy: A Thick Description of Practices

We need to remember that the teacher who must find a position and a means of getting organised within the demands of the technical literacy of a school has, himself or herself, a literate history (see Chapter One) and carries out literate practices in other areas of daily life. Teachers as well as students interact literately

with Milton Keynes and its wordy or wordless spaces. They operate different levels of reading and writing; product names and road signs skimmed semi-consciously, newspapers or study materials read in depth, novels or magazines read for light relief. All these interweave with radio, TV, music, video, computers and the sounds of traffic and neighbours. School, however, requires a specialised kind of reading and writing, which, wholly or in part, subsumes these other skills. Technical literacy as already actual specifies certain kinds of reading or writing, in certain amounts, in specific times and places.

From the first day of term, members of staff are in receipt of a mass of printed information which includes the Staff Guide, the calendar, notices and agendas for meetings, lists of students which need to be checked or completed, tutorial packages, handouts which supplement schemes of work, instructions for tasks to be carried out at INSET or at meetings, and copies of forms they will need to use with students during the year. With this pile of paper goes a large amount of oral information which must be noted and/or retained. In order to keep the year clearly before their eyes, teachers must find some way to organise relevant papers.

Those who do not eventually learn what to do with their documentation may be branded as tiresome or inefficient if they make too many mistakes. Mastery, for the probationary teacher in particular, becomes mastery not simply of a philosophy and methodology of educating, but mastery also of complex systems of paper and writing records. Within the technical style, one's efficiency with paper can be a mark as important as one's practice in constructing what it is to be a teacher.

Lessons have to be recorded in a teacher's planner, an A4 format spiral bound book with a page for every teaching day as well as pages for attendance and mark lists, which is issued free to all staff every year. The Head reserves the right to check the lesson planner so as to ensure that homework is set, although he has not done so during my time at the school. For my own subject, Modern Languages, lesson planning is a highly complex activity involving reference to text books, detailed lesson plans set out on A4 paper and stored in folders, the use of a Scheme of Work and checking against notes of previous experience. It is a highly

developed kind of competence which begins as a literate activity, note-making, but which can eventually be practised by some with fewer written props. Those who are able to teach from scratch without written notes refer to this as 'door handle preparation'. Lesson planning in Modern Languages also involves worksheets, newly made or taken from a course book, which need photocopying or other kinds of reproduction. Again there is a problem of organisation. Some colleagues' desks are littered with worksheets and banda masters. I have seen many attempts to master filing systems fail because of the enormity of the enterprise and the teachers' lack of time to keep the system in order.

Most teachers are form tutors. This means that they must take registers twice a day. The register has the status of a legal and official document which has its own system of notation (S for sick, T for medical appointment etc.) contained on an instruction sheet in the front. As with the teacher's planner, there are possible penalties if the register is not completed accurately or clearly. Printed or written notes which have been placed in registers must be read out or handed to tutor groups. Piles of school magazines and answer slips to go with them must be distributed at tutorial time. In many cases, tear-off slips must be returned and lists kept. Notices also need to be posted on tutor room notice-boards although students do not seem to be very adept at taking in the information. Sick notes from students must be received within two days of their return to school and must be read by the tutor and noted in the register.

At times the information received through registers is very complex. A tutor may discover a lengthy document in his or her register only minutes before the bell. This may concern events which require complex feats of administration, for example Activities Day or work experience. The teacher then has the important job of comprehending the information, communicating it to students in a form they can understand and then carrying out any procedures that follow from it such as collecting in and collating forms. Literacy practices here involve managing pieces of paper which have consequences, papers that may need activities and procedures as responses, papers that, like the register, may draw criticism and censure if not

handled properly and efficiently, papers which also affect the lives of the students.

Notices also proliferate in the two staffrooms where walls are plastered thick with printed or typed notes and circulars, notices and lists concerning such matters as cover lessons, messages from the Head, jobs, expulsions and suspensions, lists of students on trips, medical problems and causes, information from cross-curricular areas (equal opportunities, special needs), fire regulations and telephone numbers. There is also a weekly staff bulletin which lists meetings, comments from the Head, notices from other staff and sports results.

Internal communication is, in a split-site school, by telephone or by notes to pigeonholes, or for Senior Staff, to special files in the Head's secretary's office. Notes, letters, reports, notices and outside mail arrive daily in staff pigeonholes. They will include communications such as computer sheets which need to be checked and returned and which require accurate and prompt action by a deadline. The use of pigeonholes as a form of literate activity reflects the nature of the message even in the very form of the notes received. They may be unfolded, connoting public knowledge, but they may also be folded or stapled or in envelopes unsealed, and, most worrying of all, sealed. Also significant however is the position of the sender of the note. The Head handwrites or gets his secretary to handwrite notes. The very casualness of the note is offset by the possible implications.

Thus the hierarchical relations within literate practices reflect a managerial system which can assume that staff have a fixed role in that hierarchy.

Within subject areas, literate practices also require organisation and summarising skills. Staff have to deal with textbooks, syllabuses, home-produced handbooks and modules, teachers' books for courses, departmental circulars and minutes, examination papers, instructions, regulations and reports, material produced and distributed at INSET and the use of all these in combination to ensure, for example, adherence to the National Curriculum. Staff have actively to produce internal examination papers, worksheets and other course materials such as overhead projector transparencies. They have to store and retrieve information in forms such as books, maps, charts, cuttings and computer discs. They will, under the Baker

Contract, have to have an extended responsibility in the school, from stock control to the staging of important public events, which will undoubtedly involve more uses of literacy.

The reporting system is now by record of achievement. The intention is that students and staff negotiate a statement which the student then writes up and thus owns. This requires record-keeping of previous work and achievement by student and teacher. Because of time restraints, this negotiation, at least below sixth form level, takes the form of a set of prompt guidelines perhaps written by the teacher on the blackboard. This means for students to take an active part in their own reporting is not popular with them or with their parents. Both request that teachers' opinions should also be written in a separate section or that the older style of reports is brought back. Students seem to find it hard to write their own opinions outside the formulaic statements which seem to appear more frequently as they become used to this system. They appear, in fact, to prefer the requirements of technical literacy which allow them no personal response.

Staff literate practices in the classroom will involve the uses of books, posters, black or whiteboards and overhead projectors intermixed with visual aids such as TV, video, flashcards and oral presentation. There are also some computers available for student use although this is not yet widespread.

In the classroom, teachers also have to use paper to control student movement, for example with 'passouts' for students to leave the room and, to enforce the schools disciplinary procedures, with detention slips. The teacher thus has a 'technical' role in paper administration.

Rules For Study

There are rules set down specifically for study by MK School. They are contained in the Staff Guide and are also handed to or read to students at the start of each school year as part of the first day tutorial package.

The rules themselves stress compliance with technical procedures (Appendix A). They emphasise the value of timekeeping, so that learning is not lost, and

orderly entry into rooms. Within these rules the important aspects of literate practices in the classroom are: keeping books in good condition, bringing the correct equipment, record-keeping and the presentation of written work. Homeworks are seen as 'vital to progress', the emphasis being on handing homework in on time. The kinds of procedures being accentuated here are those that maintain a system of order, correctness and support for a system of paper management and record-keeping. That is, these are external rather than psychological understandings of the idea of study. Content, meaning and 'internal' study are mentioned in the advice that students give homework thought and care and that they do not rush it but do their best. The only mention of dialogue is the suggestion that students ask their teacher if they do not understand.

Seen in the context of the school's literate practices as I have described them thus far, the rules for study demonstrate an emphasis on external prescription and conformity. They do not explain how following these rules will lead to success and enjoyment. They do not explicate the study skills mentioned in paragraph 9. They do not make a link with personal or concept development.

The Students and Official Literacy

As we have seen with the rules for study, technical literacy in MK School sets up a series of expectations of the role of the student, a public code within which those receiving education must find a position. I will now give a thick description of student practices within official literacy. Student practices represent the 'receiving' of what I have already detailed.

Students are expected to take in information largely from what we might call, after Bakhtin, 'monologic' sources. That is they are required to some extent to be passive receivers. In assemblies, which I have used as a paradigm of publicly stated attitudes, they are expected to sit in silence and listen, taking in announcements, addresses, praise and admonitions. In their day-to-day lives they are made to conform to rules of punctuality, uniform and social behaviour. These have written sources in handouts to students and in school publications sent to parents. The

rules for written presentation are contained in the school's language policy (Appendix E), which I will discuss further on pages 211–215. Students are also required to participate in the school's forms of assessment. tests, examinations and course work, which may determine their future set, their examination grades and, indeed, their future life pattern.

Students are expected to absorb information delivered through registers daily by their tutors. This may require simple understanding and commitment to memory but a consequence will almost certainly be some kind of action, from remembering where a meeting is to be held to taking home ballot papers for parent-governor elections to parents or guardians. This in turn may also require remembering to bring back a tear-off slip to acknowledge receipt. If these are not returned then Heads of House may admonish students. Most importantly though, students see staff dealing with each other and with them through systems of paper which have consequences for those, both staff and students, who do not adhere to those systems.

Students are expected to carry from room to room writing equipment, rough books, text and exercise books and, a recent innovation, 'MKfaxes', school filofaxes containing timetables, maps of the school, reports, communication pages for messages to and from home, commendation slips to be signed by teachers for good work, House achievements and general information. Writing and other equipment and MKfaxes are supposed to be checked by the tutor on a regular basis.

As an illustration of the use of books and equipment within a mainly formal or indeed technical literate practice, I will describe briefly one variety of Modern Languages lessons, an area with which I am most familiar. Taught in a mainly traditional or technical style, these lessons would involve students listening to tapes in order to become familiar with new expressions. They would then have some form of oral practice or drill based on the text book and then complete practice exercises in their exercise books where they would also note grammatical points. Usually they will have a separate vocabulary book. Limited extension work might be done based firmly on models in the text book. Text books also supply summary charts of structures and grammar and end of unit summaries for revision for tests.

Courses also come with books of banda or photocopy masters for duplication. These include worksheets involving questions, gap-filling, drawing or puzzles and, in more recent courses, pair-work activities. Courses also include testing material in the form of sheets, tapes and teachers books. Lessons will normally be carried out according to the order and techniques laid down in the teachers book that accompanies the course. Internal school examinations will echo the format of commercially produced tests or of previous GCSE papers.

We see then how a form of teaching which relies largely on teachers and students following the requirements of a set course and adhering to the school's technical literate demands produces literate practices which largely involve following, receiving and reproducing according to set patterns.

Student Opposition to Official Literacy

It is not possible to discuss technical literacy in MK School without looking at the ways in which students subvert it. I propose now to detail student strategies of opposition. However, it should be said that they also have positive likes. They like oral activities or combinations of speaking, writing and drawing. They like games and puzzles although these may provoke a 'holiday' atmosphere. In these they feel let off work as they define it; play is not learning. They like open-ended tasks, such as project work, where they can exercise independence in format, use speech and writing, have flexibility of time and movement and use the teacher as facilitator rather than taskmaster. They like making posters or doing drawings which keep writing down to a minimum of short sentences or labels.

They attach importance to official documents which have a concrete effect on their future or which are related to agencies outside the school, for example, work experience applications and exam. entry forms. They are also keen to complete forms related to breaks in the everyday routine of the timetable such as Activities Day or trips. As well as being interested in what lies outside the technical, students are nevertheless also concerned with whatever will give them a technical *placing* within the system. This stretches to the demand that open-ended activities in the

classroom be marked and assessed, a mark or grade being preferred to a comment.

How then is opposition to technical literacy expressed? Let us begin with the MKfax which, despite its vaguely up to date image, is subject to misuse. Students regard it as cumbersome and do not bring it to school. Pieces of paper are put in willy-nilly without being attached to the clips. In practice, the MKfax and writing equipment, text books and exercise books are consistently 'forgotten' by students, particularly by those in lower sets. These students seem not to want to read or write in these forms. They also have difficulty with this reading and writing and their attitude to paper could also be that of their homes. Students often report that their mother has cleaned out their room and has thrown out text or exercise books. These are then billed to them on another form. They may also relate highly complex stories about lending their books to friends or having them taken by other students during labyrinthine disputes. Some simply admit that they have forgotten them. It is then almost impossible to carry on a lesson which depends on text books. The teacher's strategy then may be to force students to remember books by the use of detentions, to photocopy materials or to use non- textbook based methods such as worksheets.

In terms of other official materials, students also seem to practise a studied neglect with regard to circulars and medical forms. Commendation slips, which act as an incentive largely in Year 8 tail off in popularity in Year 9 and thereafter. Students possibly see the slip as indicating that they are being 'good', that is conforming to the school's prevalent code, therefore they again 'forget' to collect commendations awarded. Forgotten pens and pencils are also an onerous part of a teacher's daily work. Again it is those in lower sets who most neglect to have such materials. The teacher may have to lend the student a pen or pencil which the student may then walk off with, or they may have to make the student borrow equipment from others or go to the hall office and buy some. All this enables students to create a fuss which delays the lesson. Rough paper given out to replace lost or forgotten rough books or exercise books is often lost, not copied up or is found on the floor at the end of the lesson together with odd copies of work-

sheets, redundant pens and sweet wrappers. Meanwhile exercise book, rough book and text book covers, even wall displays, sprout graffiti. The only legitimised place for scribbling and graffiti is the rough book which students are allowed to customise semi-officially, although this may make it difficult for them to get a new one when they present the filled rough book to their Head of House. Rough books are indeed used for rough work and for more personal or peer-group writings such as drawings, graffiti and letters to friends. If the teacher finds the student doing this kind of writing when they should be attending to a lesson there may be a literal tussle for ownership of the book. Its marginal status, the fact that it was issued by the school and yet can contain more private meanings may provoke a tugging match for ownership of the book which can lead to escalation and confrontation. Students seem to feel forcefully that this territory is theirs.

Yet as I have already suggested students seem to have internalised some of the criteria of technical literacy. They are suspicious of whatever does not produce a mark. They are keen to categorise each other and their position in class tests and exams. They try to look at the teacher's mark book, which they perhaps regard as information about their own categorisation which is hidden from them. They are interested at looking back to see what their previous test scores were or they like to check in the register to see how often they have been late or away. Students often come into class and refuse to listen until they have located or borrowed a pen or pencil and acquired something to write on because they may have forgotten to bring their own materials. Even if a lesson is oral or audio-visual it is automatically assumed that the literate practice will be the priority, in fact that the rest will simply be a prelude to writing.

Students seem to have internalised a narrow view of work in the sense of exercises and tasks from books or copying from, the blackboard. Yet it is these areas which become sites of struggle between teacher and student as do homework, completion of written tasks, the careful presentation of work and the respectful handling of the text book. Teachers use punishments such as detentions to enforce all these expectations.

Students leave work incomplete, fail to do corrections, do not do homework or hand books in on time, leave gaps between pieces of work, write in the wrong medium, pencil not pen for example, or even rip pages out of exercise books. Often it is the stringency of the punishment which persuades them to alter these habits at least temporarily rather than the acceptance of a rationale for technical requirements. And yet, if the teacher fails to be on top of all these forms of antipathy to the school's literate practices, he or she may lose the respect of the students for not 'caring' enough about them to pursue them for their misdemeanours. If constant tough surveillance is not practised on, say, homeworks, few are done and yet students actually complain if they are not set, ask for homework and enquire when it has to be in.

Whatever the apparent perfection of the paper and writing systems invented by staff, the central problem seems to be that students will not necessarily receive them and use them in the ways intended, even if the formats and uses are positive. These pieces of paper can often be seen littering floors, corridors or the spaces around the school. The 'cool' attitude to the school's literacy objects is to be seen to have as few as possible in your possession. Teachers walk around carrying briefcases, files and piles of exercise books, but students who do so are labelled 'boffs'. Students like to be seen coming to school with one text book with an exercise book inside it rolled up in a pocket or simply with the small unzippable pouch on the end of a sports bag containing all the equipment needed for a day or just with nothing at all. The minimum is what is 'cool'.

Examinations: The Apex of Traditional Literacy

It is in examinations that the aspects of the technical style meet. There is bodily control: students must enter in silence, sit for an allotted time without leaving their places and they must remain silent all the time. There is control of time and space: exams have definite time spans and occur in physical spaces which demand certain behaviours and which are arranged in certain minutely controlled ways, for example desks are permitted to be less than a specified distance from each other. There

is control of literate practices: exams have demands of technique which include technical requirements such as which details to put at the top of the paper and which spaces to use for answers. The outcome of an exam. is a performance indicator affecting status with peers, parents, teachers and one's future place in a competitive hierarchy.

On several occasions I have kept notes of the questions that students ask during exams and I find that they all relate to technical aspects of the examination and not to the meaningful content of the answers. These problems are of three kinds: difficult questions, miscuing and technical details.

In the first category, students find that the terminology of the paper prevents them from understanding what is required. They ask: 'What does "liberating" mean?', 'Do we have to write a story in this one?' (The question read 'give a detailed example of one of these types of literature') and 'Do we have to write three myths out?' when the instruction was to write out three 'types of myths'.

An example of the second category is when a student asked me: 'What does it mean "Give an example of a person, plant or item that is treated in a scared way"?' when the question actually said '... in a sacred way'.

The third category is the most prevalent and brings questions such as: 'What do I use this piece of paper for?', what did the letters mean in lettered diagrams of ammeters and voltmeters and 'Is there a way to shorten "milligram" so I don't have to write it out?'. In the last example I was not able to reply because I would have provided the answer to the question. This in itself illustrates that it is not only in questions that technical details are important but also in the answers.

Language Across the Curriculum: A Case Study

I have described technical literacy as it occurs in the work of staff and students. I will now show how preconceptions about the technical become part of policy under the national curriculum. In this case study I describe my experience of a school initiative which aimed to bring the strands of school language use together as a cross-curricular language policy. By looking at the progress and final conclusions

of the first part of the school's Language Across the Curriculum Working Party, I will show the tensions at work within literacy in MK School.

The language across the curriculum initiative began with a Baker Day in December 1989. Extracts from the Cox Report were presented to staff and the necessity of a language across the curriculum policy was declared. The aspects of language use discussed on that day were the construction of worksheets for readability and the checking of the readability of text books by the use of a computer programme. In order that a common *marking* policy agreed in the meantime could be put into practice, it was agreed that the work for all Year 8 students in the first two weeks of the Autumn term 1990–1 would be on a common theme, the environment. The newly created language across the curriculum working party, with representatives from all departments, would prepare the marking policy and other parts of a language policy.

Although introduced using the more student-centred aspects of the Cox Report, we see how the idea of a language policy was immediately angled away from meaning-making towards the technical, mechanical measurements of readability and marking presented to the whole school as a priority at a training day.

I asked the Senior Teacher responsible for the management of this initiative why marking was to be the focus of the group. She said that she thought staff might agree on this relatively superficial area before progressing to more wide-ranging aspects of language use. My own feeling was the opposite should be the case. Although Cox in paragraph 17.71 does specify the need for a marking policy, the report emphasises that this should be 'one feature of a cross-curricular language policy'. As can be seen from the group's final document (Appendix E), no such general policy was agreed for marking, handwriting and spelling that did not emphasise the technical handling of text over meaning, content and learning. The student's writing became the possession of the marker.

I went to the language group meetings not as a co-opted representative but as an interested party with a stake in language use within the school as displayed in this thesis. My other more overt input into the group and, if you like, my bargaining

tool, was the concern about equal opportunities which was my official responsibility. The initial discussions of the group clearly demonstrated the tensions centred on literacy in the school. There was the assumption of a commonly accepted 'English' without reference to class, culture and gender.

There followed discussion of the 'universal' applicability of the GCSE grades A–G and the national curriculum levels of attainment as the foundations for a marking policy across years and sets, and of a standardised set of comments for all work. Against this, the point was made that the English Department personalised comments and gave no grades. The point was also made that students prefer a grade and a comment but that if the grade is not to their liking they tend to ignore the comment. The Cox Report paragraphs 17.68 and 17.71 including James Britton's comments on the duty of the teacher to attend carefully to children's writing were distributed for discussion at the next meeting.

At the second meeting, paragraphs 3.1. to 3.14. of the Cox Report were presented. This seemed a very positive development because these paragraphs deal with apprenticeship approaches, respect for language cultures, attention to language use in school and the importance of talk. Yet the staff discussion centred largely on the use and teaching of terminology in class and the teacher's role in the explanation of meaning, on ways to increase students' vocabulary and on the enhancement of literacy by the teaching of grammar and spelling. It was felt by a CDT teacher that general standards of literacy had declined. Thus a text which promotes approaches to language in school which set up a dialogue was translated by the majority of the group into the basis for a debate on transmission and delivery of terms, meanings and the technical aspects of literacy to the student.

I found this meeting frustrating because, as the discussion continued, the group did not see the role of 'English' but simply the drilling and committing to memory of presentation skills based on a behavioural model. General literacy was seen as a matter of instilling correctness. During the meeting I was trying to articulate to myself why the teaching of grammar was the wrong starting point for the group. As someone whose role in school had not been until then one in which I had to

present arguments about language, and equally since I had not yet written this chapter of this thesis which articulates these arguments, I was in the dilemma of not being able to produce a reason for this error although I knew something was wrong. My thought at the time was that the cultural context of language was being ignored, that school was seen as simple induction into preset discourses, the schooled forms of language.

Eventually I suggested that equal opportunity necessarily involved supporting a child's language and dialect. I also pointed out the gender aspects of language use, referring to work in the field of gender and education which suggests that girls' peer group cultures enable them to develop their language competences legitimately whereas boys' cultures work to hold back language development (Askew and Ross, 1988). I finally suggested that under the national curriculum, language development could be seen as an entitlement for all. I suggested that the group should look at those concrete situations of language use where this development could occur in school rather than at situations involving technical rules.

It was then decided that sub-groups should be formed and should report back to the next meeting on the topics of the purpose, style and tone of written comments, pointing out technical errors and the manner of their correction, techniques to encourage successful examples of language use, discussion of work with the pupil, marking in connection with further learning, and assessment and records of achievement.

I include as Appendix C all the material that I and my colleagues produced on our allotted topic: 'techniques to encourage successful examples of language use'.

I was unable to go to the next meeting which was in any case poorly attended and a colleague presented our work. When the draft marking policy appeared it contained some of our suggestions but none of our complex findings (Appendix B). Instead it incorporated the less complex technical findings of the other groups and contained the suggestions for symbols for use when marking work put forward by Business Studies representatives (Appendix D). At least part of the reason, in my opinion, for the omission of our work was that it made the whole issue so

much more complex in comparison to the simple technical pragmatic model based on the majority of the group's common-sense notion of language use in school. Partly also, I think, my absence from the meeting was a factor. This demonstrates the predominance of common-sense notions of the technical since the absence of one dissenting voice can make the difference to policies which will affect the lives of students.

The draft marking policy was then processed through House Teams meetings and became the basis of the environment work for students in 1990-1.

My own contact with the group lasted barely the whole of 1989–90. By October 1990 a new schedule of meetings had forced me to abandon language policy meetings in order to attend a sixth form meeting to which I was committed because I taught in that department. By then the language group was refining the draft marking policy by looking at the (technical) matter of handwriting and was also working on computer-generated statements for records of achievement.

This account demonstrates how the technical style, because of its simple logic, won out over attempts to introduce more abstract and complex fundamentals of language use. The first part of the final School Language Policy demonstrates this (Appendix E). Despite mention of dialogue the overt majority of the policy statements are concerned with the technical aspects of language and their delivery to students.

At the end of February 1992, the second part of the policy, on reading, writing, speaking and listening, was published for staff discussion. In the light of my description of the genesis of Part One, I was surprised on first reading Part Two of the policy at what I perceived to be a swing to the 'dialogic' (see page 263). I then felt it necessary to test my perception of Part Two (Appendix F) by isolating the technical and the dialogic in Parts One and Two. I will use these findings to show, in the end, the coexistence, tension and contradictions of the technical and the dialogic in MK School.

The Alternative Style

I have suggested that the traditional or technical style has a dominant role in MK School. There is however an alternative style present alongside and beneath the technical style. The problem for a description of this style is that it is often invisible in those transactions which determine the general policy and direction of the school and which give messages about it to members of the school and to the outside world. It is therefore often also invisible in the final documents from working parties, the Staff Guide, notices to parents, directives from the Senior Management Team and in the proceedings of school meetings. This alternative style is also present in that large area called the 'pastoral', which is split off from the academic and in the interstices of school activities. It is also seen in unofficial activities. I will now describe the sites and characteristics of this alternative style.

Assemblies

The assemblies to which many students appear to listen avidly, rather than adopt an expression both blasé and bored are those where the speaker offers a personal anecdote, perhaps a childhood or holiday experience or an account of a friend who was a prisoner of war or who comes from another culture. Even if the speaker feels the need to end a story with a moral students will listen if the story does not exist solely to point a moral. Ultimately, I think, this kind of story lets the listener rather than the speaker draw any conclusions because the speaker is offering the personal, something relative to him or herself and not the didactic. In these narratives there exist the possibilities of both sharing experience and learning about significant differences in experience which confirm our individualities rather than our uniformity. These stories demonstrate publicly the validity of our individual, perhaps unheroic and marginal, histories as people and insodoing they give equality of significance to everyone's stories. This kind of useful knowledge about the world can, I think, arguably be called education rather than schooling. These narratives are my first example of the alternative style in MK School.

The Alternative Style in the Literate Environment

To an environment covered with official paper both on work desks and walls, staff sometimes bring other literate practices. The staffrooms in both halls have sectioned noticeboards for Head's Notices, Hall Administration and other official noticeboards, but there will also be a section for staff's own use where there is an assortment of notices for plays, concerts and items for sale brought in by individual staff members. Sometimes teachers pin other pieces of paper on the actual divisions between noticeboards, indicating their separate status. These may be newspaper articles on teaching which either feature people from the school or which contain controversial opinions. Often a further anonymous comment has been written on these with felt--tip pen. Other items pinned up are cartoons, jokes, letters from colleagues who have recently left or who have been ill for a long time, photos of colleagues in embarrassing situations and letters or postcards from students on holiday. Pigeonholes are also used for such non-technical purposes as the sending of Christmas cards and for personal notes between members of staff.

These kinds of communications are, I suggest, different from the official ones in that they treat writer and reader as people on an equal footing, not within a power relationship.

In the gaps between marking or dealing with school documents, staff may discuss other kinds of reading, from Camus and Todorov to Tolkien and the 'TES'. However the actual reading of other material in the staffroom, except for the occasional skim through the TES or a local newspaper is an extremely rare sight.

The students' overt equivalent of the alternative style in the literate environment is in the displays of their work in classrooms, displays designed not just for the visitor but for the class and for other classes using the room to read. In this way, work is given status and students learn from each other and provide audiences for each other. There is, however, no official mechanism in the school for students to communicate *on their own terms* in writing with other students. There are official channels such as a House magazine and some sections of the school

magazine, but these are, I suggest, aimed at audiences which are seen as more public and formal than interpersonal. Neither are there ways for students to display their own notices or comments with official sanction except for the occasional tutor group noticeboard and those Business Education mini-enterprise projects which require students to set up companies and market their goods, usually stationery, to other students using the manipulative techniques of the world of advertising. In my experience, giving a tutor group noticeboard space is usually short-lived. It is either not used or materials are 'graffitied' or stolen.

Yet students do have pressing concerns which could be expressed to others. One day when I was covering an English class for which no work had been set, I asked the class what they felt strongly about. As animal testing was the most frequent response, I tried to start a discussion. At this point a student took from his bag a whole sheaf of leaflets against animal testing and without being asked, got up and started to hand them out to the class. What happened here seems to me common to other situations in the school. It was in a situation where a) the class felt that there were anomalies, no work had been set and I was not an English teacher and b) the lesson was oral, not based on school materials. Therefore it was felt that something 'subversive' was worth a try.

'Stepping back' from procedures can also be positive for staff. It is possible. for example, for the teacher 'in character' to comment on or point out examples of sexism or other bias in materials in use in the classroom.

Equal Opportunities: The Alternative Style and a Cross-Curricular Initiative

In my role as Co-ordinator of Equal Opportunities I have produced documents, summaries, recommendations and reports all of which I have tried to make the basis for oral discussion and perhaps written response. I have tried to consult, to create a *dialogue* and to make staff feel that they own the EO initiative. This is an example of an official cross-curricular area being treated in a non-technical way, in fact let me call it a *dialogic* style. I think that my initiative has had some influence on

the use of print in the school where some other documents have since been made the basis of shared discussion, experience and consensus and can then stand as guarantors of agreed policies. This had been the case with the school's EO statement which I took through staff, governors and parents. It now stands in official documents as the agreed basis for further policy.

Nevertheless, in a school which also values technical literacy above others my work can be misperceived. A colleague commented at a recent training day on multicultural education that working parties simply issue 'dogma' without action. This is a constant problem, since, among all my other work, I have the task of finding ways to present information about EO to staff in an appropriate form and to convince them that action always does follow. To this end I now produce a yearly EO Action Plan and make sure that it is worked through and that the concrete tasks it contains are actually carried out or are renegotiated or restructured in that process. Even so, it is easy for some colleagues to say they 'don't know what's going on'. They quickly forget the negotiation processes they have gone through because of the continual rigid demands of the technical style.

In fact it could be said that *every* official document produced, whether consultative or not, becomes dialogic in that it is often immediately subject to oral commentary and criticism from those staff receiving it. Occasionally a written document feeds back *orally* into decision-making. I once wrote a considered commentary on a school behaviour policy initiative. This was given a great deal of attention and time at a General Purposes meeting where a Deputy Head summarised it *orally* to enable discussion.

Negotiations over documents and oral discussion also occur in the use of shared experience to produce schemes of work, worksheets, lesson plans and to do INSET exercises. This is a recent kind of experience for some colleagues and it is sporadic in practice. I suggest that it is difficult for a school which has worked for so long in a technical mode to adopt wholly a paradigm which uses writing as a spur to negotiation of meanings within an atmosphere of professional equality rather than hierarchy.

The Dialogic Style in the Classroom

In some areas of the curriculum the dialogic style is prevalent, in others it is a lesser factor. A major example of large-scale legitimisation of the dialogic style is in the school's English department where reading and personal writing are sanctioned by the Cox Report and by the GCSE, which, at the time of writing, is assessed by 100% course work. English is a grey area. It is a subject which students positively like yet it is also adorned with the technicalities of spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation. It uses set books but these are books which allow meanings which do not have an immediate didactic function and are not directly related to testing. Texts such as Waterland, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings and The Colour Purple, all studied in the One Year Sixth course, for example, link students to lives elsewhere. In school they are being given the chance to see if books can have uses and meanings beyond assessment, to see if school fits the world.

The school library shares the function of offering to students personal meanings not linked to assessment. In other subject areas, particularly those such as History and R.E. where empathy is a validated concept, students also use expressive techniques such as poetry and role play. Yet it is also possible to walk into classrooms in the school where students are copying from the blackboard. Support teachers however who take students aside individually or in a small group, helping them to read and talking about the book, are also working dialogically.

A dialogic teaching style, or indeed a teaching style with some dialogic elements, emphasises the meaningfulness and usefulness of the material as a means of learning and of enjoyment of learning prior to presentation and correctness. It allows oral and written interrogation, criticism, negotiation and drafting of pieces of work. It emphasises the meaning of the finished work as much as the fact that it is complete, correct and handed in on time. Surveillance thus takes second place to ownership by the student and his or her audience.

I would suggest that this kind of thing happens, in however small a way, in most lessons. Even in the worst case of a lesson spent largely copying from the board, teacher-student conversation may arise on a less formal level, while students' own

talk, which gravitates from 'on task' to 'off task', is a kind of circling around texts which is dialogic in character. As I have said, however, this style has not been promoted as the expected style of lessons in school.

I will illustrate what lessons in the dialogic style might be like by looking again at Modern Language teaching. There have been three paradigm changes in language teaching at MK School in the last ten years. The first paradigm is the technical one which I described on page 206. The second is the *communicative* paradigm, embodied in the new GCSE which required that the classroom be a place where language was in use but only in those situations which might be useful in the foreign country, for example obtaining goods and services. The third paradigm is the *interactive*, now enshrined in the national curriculum Modern Languages Orders which require that the classroom be a place where there is constant interaction between student and teacher in the foreign language without restriction to communicative situations from the foreign country, and showing that the language can in fact be used in a dialogue for the exchange of meanings in the classroom. This style demands the use of overhead projectors, video, computers and visual aids such as flashcards to allow a rapidly changing set of interactions in which students come to use new 'chunks of language', as the National Curriculum document calls them. Textbooks of the older kind need to be adapted for meaning-making rather than for preset answers. Written work needs to be open-ended and involve personal topics and the students' own opinions. Games and puzzles will give rewards in themselves prior to their relation to tests and examinations.

Encounters with Dialogic Literacy

Dialogic literacy may also be seen in those unplanned and anomalous gaps between the times and spaces marked down by technical expectations. The encounter may be totally accidental, for example when a teacher helps a new student to find his or her way to a classroom using a map of the school in the MKfax. It may also be extracurricular as when a teacher discusses with students maps and written rules for a Duke of Edinburgh Award task.

These less planned encounters may also take place within official sections of the timetable. The tutor has many opportunities to engage in this kind of encounter. The 'spare time' in which this may occur will probably be that anomalous ten minutes or so after the register and notices have been dealt with. Students recognise the nature of this time and tend subtly to reclaim it by turning to their own conversations or private reading and writing. The tutor may discuss with the student the magazine or newspaper he or she is reading or the record or cassette cover that he or she has been showing to friends. This may lead to a discussion of likes and dislikes, opinions, feelings or career intentions. The tutor may also be asked to help students fill in work experience application forms or forms for part-time jobs or college places. Similar conversations arise in these circumstances weaving in and out of the literate practice involved. A simple notice such as a job vacancy list from the Careers Service which the tutor pins on the noticeboard may have the same effect. The tutor has the task of negotiating the tutorial record of achievement with the student. The tutor can attempt genuine negotiation in this since he or she must negotiate an account of personal qualities as well as general progress.

In the classroom such encounters may take place as a by-product of or as a pause in work. Teacher and student may discuss a library book or a personal reading book which the student has left on the desk.(Both may in fact meet in the school library where they both can choose books for personal reading.) Another kind of encounter with dialogic literacy in the classroom is when the student takes a task set by the teacher and adapts it to his or her own purpose, for example when a practice letter in a foreign language is used to describe a recent event such as a grandparent's funeral, or when an autobiography in a Social Science GCSE is used to articulate the student's most personal problems. This may or may not be what the teacher intended.

Students may also suggest to the teacher new methods for classroom techniques which the teacher may then incorporate into practice. Occasionally students will write questions, comments or criticisms after a piece of work to which the teacher can then choose to write a reply.

The anomaly of these encounters is that they seem to those who work in a largely technical style to be risky. In dialogic situations, students and teachers catch glimpses of actions, intentions and roles beyond the technical.

The One Year Sixth Course

The One Year Sixth course at MK School combines a pre-vocational training diploma with examination re-takes. It is significant in this account because, in the pre-vocational course, dialogic methods such as workshops, flexible learning and negotiated tasks, outcomes and deadlines are used. Many staff at MK School find these methods uncomfortable and inappropriate. The course is seen by many teachers as an 'easy ride' for unsuccessful pupils. Students too find the methods hard to adapt to. Nevertheless, many develop more mature ways of approaching adults by doing it.

A course such as this allows literate encounters of a dialogic kind. Tutors negotiate module summaries and work experience reports with students. The wording must be agreed by both and the document signed by both before it is typed up, signed again by both parties and put in the student's portfolio. Tutors also have regular progress interviews with students and record agreed comments on a form which is owned by both and is filed in the student's personal file. The modules themselves lead to discussions between staff and students about reference sources and inquiry methods. Tutors give help with the wording of questionnaires and interview questions which the students will go and carry out in leisure centres, health centres, old people's homes, industry and other outside institutions. At times the students' ideas will generate a change in tutors' approaches and opinions which may then be remembered and applied in similar situations in the future.

6.3 Unofficial Literacy

I have described the place of literacy in the official culture of the school and referred to the tensions and contradictions which result from two opposing versions of literacy there. I now turn to unofficial student literacies. I will place these

literacies within the school subculture of which they are a part. I will show how school subculture is a particular blend of the popular literacies discussed in Chapters Two, Four and in this chapter. I will stress that student subculture develops as it does because it is the meeting point of the popular culture which includes literacy with schooled literacy itself.

In my pilot study of graffiti I put forward certain hypotheses. I will develop these here by testing them against other examples of unofficial literacies. In brief my hypotheses were:

a) graffiti are not trivial but literate, ironic and knowing,
b) they discuss topics not covered by the school,
c) they represent tensions within the school subculture and within student identities
d) they have their own sources of reference in popular culture,
e) they belong to a particular material and temporal environment,
f) they are part of a culture which involves risk, dare and transgression,
g) they are dialogic and part of a Bakhtinian carnival which attempts to upturn the established order.

I will now describe the school subculture and then place literacy within it.

The School Subculture: Some Outlines

In presenting this description I will call on both the categories produced by my study of graffiti and the categories used in anthropology discussed in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Three I discussed Milton Keynes as a disjunctive situation. People from many places bring to it both shared and distinctive cultural approaches to literacy. The meeting of these same and different cultural 'texts' in the school is what Said (1984) calls 'affiliative', a temporary group consciousness, a 'common culture' which broadly unifies what was fragmentary. The students are 'insiders', privy to the traditions of pupil culture which go back through decades as well as to

their modern variations. Teachers and parents, to students at least, are outsiders.

The particular context of a new town also has an effect on the idea of learning which these students bring into this subculture. It is noticeable that students who come from certain estates in Milton Keynes, those occupied by lower income groups and the unemployed, have a 'streetwise' attitude. A colleague told me that he played guitar for a theatre group that toured Milton Keynes in the summer and that in one such estate they were nearly booed off, not because of their performance but because the teenagers and children in the audience had no idea of the appropriate behaviour for such a performance. He said that some went wild, climbing on the stage and small children were out, alone and unsupervised, at the evening performance.

To me this indicates that a major form of learning for many young people in Milton Keynes is through their peers on the streets. Learning is not then a monopoly of the school and nor is the initiation into culture. Attitudes to, for example, property and authority, are formed already. This problem is exacerbated if the school tries to teach not meanings and genuine means of developing in the cultural fields it can offer but simply techniques and technologies as a substitute far learning.

Street learning, I suggest, feeds into the school subculture. There can be advantages, subculturally, in a 'street' knowledge, for example of sex. If you come from one of the 'bad' estates and fail in the system, you can still gain kudos for this kind of alternative learning which is also a breaking of taboos.

The Rhythms of Subculture

The results of the meeting of this subculture and its traditional and its distinctive new town elements, with the 'technical' emphasis of MK School is a pattern of tensions. These tensions operate in dialogue with the public rhythms of school weeks, terms and years, but their eruption is often frightening and inexplicable to teachers who only have a partial view of what is happening in the subculture itself. The first day back at school is a good example. The students are 'high', challenge staff and want to renew their social contacts within their own subculture. There

are also events which seem to exacerbate the appearance of aggressive behaviour. Any disruption in the regular rhythm of the school week, such as a training day or school exams raises this same 'high' behaviour and the same challenges. Exam. weeks themselves provoke tensions and, near the end of the week, increased student absences. Then, returning after school exams, students again are noisy, call across the class, disturb exams which were not completed in the previous week.

Violence or threatened violence also boil up without apparent reasons. In 1985 I observed a group after a fight. Boys stood around in large groups tensely 'eyeing' each other. There was a still, tense atmosphere. From nowhere teenagers from outside school, a Rockabilly and a Punk, had appeared in the middle of the group as a centre of attention. The weather too was thundery. There are also individual eruptions. I saw one student who had been admonished for continually unacceptable behaviour in class have a violent temper fit, banging his fists against the wall, going red, tearful, swearing revenge on all teachers. While I was at MK School there were two violent incidents which came 'up' out of interpupil tensions. In one, a boy was stabbed with a pair of scissors during a textiles lesson because he had provoked a girl once too often. Afterwards apparently there was talk of other students ganging up on the girl who did this. In a second incident a boy fractured another's skull one break-time in the toilets. He had brought a spanner in under his coat to exact private revenge for a dispute. Thus there is a dialogue of official and unofficial rhythms in school.

Rites of Passage

Connected to the rhythms of the subculture are its rites of passage. The dominant culture has its 'objective status passages', such as exams and options (Silverman, 1985). The subculture has its 'subjective' status passages. These involve smoking, drinking and relationships with the opposite sex, from the first boy or girlfriend to the sexual act. It will be noticed that all these are taboos to the official culture of the school. The student encounters then both the rhythm of the days, weeks, terms and years of his or her four years in compulsory education at

MK School and the passages within these rhythms regarded as important by the subculture. The teacher notices these rhythms as changes in the style and 'pupil' identities of students. Year 8 students come in quiet and docile. They may 'go off' by the end of Year 8. 'Going off' near the end of the first term is common for those who will be troublemakers. 'Going off' in the first few weeks of Year 8 is a recipe for disaster. The challenges, aggression and rudeness of Year 9 students may continue into years 10 and 11 and the students will do poorly in exams as a result. On the other hand, some students change drastically in years 10 and 11, often because of their first steady relationship which brings a more stable personality and partly, I would suggest, as a result of satisfying the demands of the subculture. I am suggesting then that there is a pattern of alternative rites of passage in the subculture.

Clothing: An Example of Subcultural Categories

In my pilot study of graffiti, I suggested that there were certain functions that graffiti carried out within the subculture, for example subversion, risk and transgression. I wish now to suggest that these simple categories may apply to *all* aspects of MK School's student subculture. To illustrate this I will use a non-linguistic example, that of clothes, although I should acknowledge that in the work of Barthes, for example, there are arguments that clothing is itself a system comparable to that of a language.

MK School has a uniform. It has been agreed by governors with strong parental support. Administrators and teaching staff constantly spend time monitoring this uniform and punishing those who do not wear it. The uniform list exists in printed form in the Staff Handbook and is read out to students at the beginning of every school year.

Students subvert and transgress these uniform rules. They do so by degrees. If white trainers are allowed they wear black ones as a small rebellion. If they wish to stage a big revolt, they turn up to school, perhaps with an unconvincing excuse note, clothed partly or entirely in fashionable non-uniform clothes. If they are then

sent home to change they escape lessons and gain kudos in the alternative merit system of the subculture.

We should note that uniform is subverted with fashionable clothes. This demonstrates the use of the popular culture of consumerism as a weapon of subversion within an anti-school subculture. Teenage fashion forms part of a popular culture of clothing which itself has a history and systems of meaning (see for example Hebdige, 1979). The rapidly changing teenage fashions of Milton Keynes borrow from sports wear, black American street styles, previous British youth cultural styles and trashy gimmicks such as plastic earmuffs popular in 1985 for a brief period. With the styles go the labels. Words on clothing have become a way to define yourself as an insider or an outsider, particularly in the case of sportswear and expensive trainers.

The idea of self-definition by private property, in this case clothing, is paralleled by other instances where unlikely items are thought of as purchasable. When students, for example, are asked to pay for lost text books they regard the new one as their property because they have 'bought' it and not as a publicly owned object on trust. Students also seem to choose options not on the merits of the subject but in the spirit of supermarket special offers. The choice does not always mean a commitment to the subject and the work involved. I am suggesting then that all aspects of student subculture can be categorised by the same set of common features.

The Regulation ofTime and Space

I have suggested that student subculture in MK School is in dialogue with official culture. I will now discuss students' tactics of subversion but I must first establish the context of that subversion. It is, I suggest, the material setting of the school. The architecture of the school is the physical space where the subculture happens. It is initially where adolescents have to go by law every day of the school term to spend their day with older people. It is the space where they congregate, are marshalled, have a degree of free movement or have to find private spaces of their own. The shape of the building itself despite the flowerbeds, grass and trees is a

space which embodies a technology of education. The central long corridor of the newer hall leads to colour-coded courtyards and then to classrooms. Subject classrooms are grouped round certain courtyards. Houses have their own courtyards. The intention is clear. Students enter, come into House areas and/or into subject areas, where they 'belong' according to the decisions and theories of others embodied in this architecture.

In practice these spaces require constant control and surveillance. Students are made to stay outside the building in almost all weathers until 8:45. They are then allowed to enter the long corridor under the eyes of duty staff and Senior Teachers. They go straight to tutor rooms and are registered. They then go to assembly or wait to go to lessons. At breaks they are supervised by duty staff in the central corridor and courtyards. At lunchtime they are again made to leave the building unless they are eating sandwiches or buying food. There are no longer any hot school meals. Otherwise they are allowed in to the library or infrequently to clubs or meetings.

The control of space brings with it a control, and therefore a theory, of the use of time. A system of bells regulates the school day. The six lessons of the day with breaks and lunchtime divide students' learning time into 45, 50 or 95 minute sections and into different subjects. It is assumed that learning is consistently possible within these chunks of time in this pattern in this place. Teachers then have to control and enforce concentration within these allotted time spans.

Subversive Strategies

Students literally struggle to regain time and space in MK School. They have strategies for undermining every rule. They tread on the flowerbeds and use the outside of the school as an improvised site for their own games. They run in the corridors, bring their footballs inside and try to boot them about in corridors or even classrooms. They are deliberately late for school or lessons or do not appear at all. They try to get into school when they are not supposed to be there, before 8:45 and at lunchtimes. They play games of risk and dare by trying to outwit the

duty staff: at break they try to get into forbidden spaces, and then watch out for teachers and run away. They try to stay in classrooms or in foyers at break when not allowed and, if challenged, depart deliberately slowly and reluctantly. If asked to line up before lessons, they sprawl all over the courtyards or play games involving chasing or insults. Toilets are spaces used by students for illicit meetings, 'graffitiing', smoking, meeting friends or even eating sandwiches perhaps because these are at least semi-private spaces they can claim back. Students try to get let out to toilets during the lesson, often making assignations to meet friends, have a quick cigarette or just to escape pressures. In what they consider to be pauses in lessons, for example when they have finished a piece of work and have not been told what to do next, students think it legitimate to use their rough books to write letters, to play pencil and paper games there, or perhaps to read a Judy Blume novel or a magazine. These are unofficial literate practices, often partly but not completely concealed from the teacher and not used directly for subversion. These are practices which students feel they own. They resent being told to stop, to put materials away or, worst of all, to having materials taken away from them.

Within lessons there is a large variety of strategies used to subvert teaching and, if not to win back space and time, then at least to confuse those who are trying to take it. These strategies, involving as we will see the literate and the linguistic, can be seen in the following examples:

1. Refusing to be quiet.
2. Calling out while the teacher is talking, trying to turn a (however brief) monologue into a dialogue, making personal comments about the teacher to their face.
3. Passing notes or writing messages on rough paper or books.
4. Drawing.
5. Humming or singing.
6. Throwing things.
7. Insulting each other.
8. Playfighting when the teacher's back is turned.

9. Giving the teacher someone else's name if caught.
10. Not listening to explanations.
11. Pretending that they cannot hear.
12. Trying to write everything down even if it is clearly an oral section of the lesson.
13. Copying whatever is on the board even if it is from a previous lesson.
14. And, of course, graffiti on the desk.

Students try to talk in assembly or examinations when they are forbidden to do so. They will only not do this when they have been impressed by the seniority of a member of staff present. Thus House assemblies tend to be noisier than Year assemblies where the Head is present. When they leave assemblies, they try to walk back through the rows of chairs by pushing over them rather than wait to leave their row.

Through all this the teacher has to take on the role of control, surveillance and policing. In anomalous times, such a tutor period or the last afternoon of term, when rules are not clear, students try to take back time and space (by rearranging their seating perhaps or by sitting on the desks) in order to do things they want or need to do – talk, read magazines, arrange dates or do homework (forbidden in tutor periods.)

The introduction of Period 31, an extra lesson on Wednesdays, delivered by the tutor and supposed to fulfil the school's cross-curricular requirements under the national curriculum was another site of disgruntlement or subversion. Students would arrive late, not listen and refuse to do anything because they 'did not see the point'. When we tried to negotiate the ground rules for this session they tried to make a set of rules which enabled them to totally ignore the session if they chose to, for example by being allowed to listen to Walkmans or by introducing freedoms which had no direct relevance to the format such as being allowed to eat and drink. Once ground rules had been agreed they proceeded to subvert those as well.

Even the punishments administered are subverted by failure to turn up, challenge or argument. Students' final gesture of rebellion, especially at the ends of terms is to ring the firebell. Not only does this disrupt all classes but turns the system of time and space controlled by bells upside down using bells to do so.

Students' Language Use in their Subculture

I will turn now to language use in student subculture. I will begin with oral language and then discuss unofficial literacy. Students' subcultural language use is, it must be recalled, part of the fragile consensus and levelling-down, the affiliation I described on page 224. Just as new students enter MK School and meet the school culture with all its expectations of language and literacy, so also do they enter the subculture, parts of which they will be familiar with from their previous schools and from the streets. They are receiving, in MK School, the common cultural heritage of older students, a sociolect which exists because the dominant school culture and its ideologies exist. The language of the subculture, as with its other aspects, is a language of subversion, risk and taboo. It is also however, a language based on a state of subjection and therefore it takes for granted certain major concepts of the dominant culture, for example hierarchy. This language also recycles its own past in Middle and First school subcultures by perpetuating games, rhymes and crazes and other aspects of the history of the lore and language of schoolchildren. This 'language out of place' is also, as I have said, in Milton Keynes, the language of the pseudo Eastender, a stylised version of the phraseology and accent of the original dwellers in Milton Keynes, the London overspill population. It should also be remembered that this South London dialect is now a norm in youth culture and has been spread by the mass media.

Student language, I suggest, shares the characteristics I identified in my pilot study of graffiti listed on page 113 Particularly, I wish to stress again its reliance on deliberate inappropriateness, taboo, symbolic resistance, risk, dare, playing with identities, trick, shock, the use of dialogue. the use of insult, word play and the winning back of language from the institution.

Some Aspects of Subcultural Language Use

One day in my tutor period three girls aged fourteen or fifteen were making up a chant with handclaps. I found this a very striking paradigmatic instance because it has so many ramifications. Singing and clapping games, particularly in the culture of girls, have a place in the lore and language of schoolchildren as described by the Opies. We need to remember though that these students live in a city of electronic media, especially cable TV, where they are exposed to the American versions of these chants in cheerleading. We should also remember that rap comes from folk rhymes. We have here a whole nexus of influences in popular culture. The interesting part is perhaps the American connection because it is American street slang, with its origins in Black American culture, which forms one major source of the language of opposition adopted by the subculture. Thus 'cool' and 'cool dudes' (pronounced 'doods' I was told by two girls) are recently fashionable words.

This leads to the high turnover of 'in' words. Such words are customised or coined and reappropriated from the dominant language or reinvented from existing slang. Let us take three examples. The phrase 'it's cinch', with its missing 'a', is an adaptation of existing slang. 'I just got mass-murdered outside' is an appropriation of a phrase from history and the mass media to indicate rough play outside the classroom. It is obviously also an exaggeration and a dramatisation. It ties in with the use of phrases such as 'you're dead' to indicate personal vendettas mentioned in my pilot study. My third example is a succession of words, 'sussed', 'suffer', 'gutted' all of which in turn have indicated that a student has bested another in some way.

A third aspect of student subcultural language is transgression. This has two facets, swearing and prejudice. Swearing is used as a form of greeting. For example, I heard one girl call out to another while crossing between the two halls: 'Andrea! You fat cow! You fucking slagbag!' I think we have to accept that this kind of discourse is a way of including others in the common culture. Taboo words and ideas become a norm, appropriating insults to make greetings and making the outsider an insider. Take for instance the foregrounding of homophobic slang amongst

boys: a boy crossing a courtyard calls out to another 'Where's Bender?' and in a Science lesson I hear one boy say to another 'Get off, bent bum' I also had this conversation with a boy who was talking about his friend:

Boy: 'He's gay Sir. He comes from the Blue Oyster Bar'
Me: 'What's the Blue Oyster Bar?'
Boy: 'In "Police Academy 1"' (In the film one of the main characters mistakenly wanders into a gay bar)

Taboo words are however also used to exclude. This can occur for example when boys make sexist comments about, to them, unattractive girls. For example, I saw two boys passing a poorly dressed girl, her head bowed, wearing a pink coat and short socks. The first boy called out 'Hello Vanessa' and the second 'Oh Vanessa, you're well horny!' The words 'well horny' were drawn out.

This strategy is also used against boys who fail to live up to fashionable norms or show poverty. Two boys shouted at another 'Kevin! Whad' you get for Christmas? Haircut?'

Name-calling is also used to attack the norms of the dominant culture through insults levelled against those who are academically successful ('swots', 'snobs' or 'boffs') or who are seen to be too cooperative with teachers. Yet, paradoxically, at the same time students label others hierarchically in terms of lack of intelligence. They are quick to call such people 'thick' or 'trog'.

The second major facet of the use of taboos is as a subversion of values with the intention to shock. This occurs in the use, as seen above, of overt sexism and of racism The examples I collected were all in the form of jokes. The first I overheard from a Year 10 student: 'Did you hear about the Irish student who stayed up all night revising for a urine test?'. The other two were both from the same girl in my tutor group:
Q. 'What do you call a load of cripples in a swimming pool?'

A. 'Vegetable soup.'

Q. 'How do you know it's vegetable soup?'

A. 'The wheelchairs float to the top.'

and

Q. 'Why did the monkey fall out of the tree?'

A. 'It was dead.'

These seem to me to be both 'hard' subversions of more widespread and childish formulas and also part of a culture of risk and dare.

A fourth aspect of student language is the transformation of names into common-cultural forms. I recorded seven ways in which names were transformed.

1. Partridge (1980) states that it a teenage fashion of the 1970s to truncate the forename and add another letter. Taking the example of my tutor group, I found the following examples of this. First names were transformed by adding a 'z' as in 'Daz' and 'Kaz'. Surnames were changed by adding a 'y' as in Coe – 'Coey' and True – 'Truesy'. Exceptions to this rule were names which already had an existing tradition of truncation as in Richard – 'Ricky'. This transformation could also be used to blur sexual identities as in the girl's name Lesley which became 'Wesley'. The 'y' ending also extended to take in taboo breaking through prejudice as in a black student who was called 'Curry' and a boy with prominent teeth and glasses whose real name was Justin but who became 'Mongey' (as in mongol).
2. Some names were changed by using part of the full name as in 'Jay Mac' (Jason McCollin) or 'Jay Tee', initials only.
3. I saw names written with an 'i' rather than a 'y' as in two girls' nicknames 'Benji' and 'Debbi'.
4. Names were transformed by adding insulting words. Thus Hunt became 'Huntslaps' (slaphead = bald), Bush became 'Bushhead', Paul Roberts became 'Paul Robbers' and Beckford became 'Beckstains', presumably a reference to masturbation.
5. Some students were referred to by surname only e.g. 'McCollin'. This practice

also involved the very slight distortion of a name such that 'Pyner' was pronounced 'Pinner' for example, or Quinn became 'Queeny'.

6. Other students were referred to not by name but directly by insults such as 'slaphead', 'spamhead' or 'gyp' (i.e. gipsy).
7. Whole phrases were appropriated for names from other sources. One boy, for example, was nicknamed 'Flat Stanley'.

Talking to Teachers

Students treat teachers with strategies intended to distance and ironise the relationship. Out of earshot and sometimes within, teachers are referred to by their surnames. A student who knew that a particular teacher was away said: 'Cos Bullough's not 'ere'. To your face, students call you 'Sir', 'Miss' or sometimes 'Mr …', 'Mrs …' or Miss …'. The emphasis however is on distance and non-cooperation, at least on the surface.

Because of distance and irony, encounters with teachers are often pseudo-exchanges which may appear superficially banal. This banality however stems from the tension of students meeting teachers when those teachers are perceived to wield power, expectations and judgements.

Angela: 'Hello Mr Hodges'
Me: 'Hello'
Angela: 'Sir, you got us s'afternoon'
Me: 'I know'

This is an apparently pointless conversation, stating publicly something that both parties knew anyway. But let us consider the context.

The student who spoke was one of two girls sitting on a window ledge in one of the small foyers near a group of classrooms at lunchtime. I was on my way to the languages office just nearby. The point was that neither girl was supposed to be in the building at lunchtime. The girl who did not speak was the girl who, that morning,

had stabbed a boy who was deliberately provoking her with a pair of scissors in a needlework lesson. The boy had gone to hospital. The 'Hello' thus indicated that they knew they shouldn't be here, that they knew I knew this, that I knew what had happened that morning but that they needed to sit there quietly away from others who were blaming the girl for what she did. My reply meant that I knew all this and that I did not intend to move them. The mention of the fact that I had them that afternoon was an assertion both of normality, of connection and a plea for being left alone because of this. Yet this conversation took the form of an invitation to a dialogue, a kind of game of strategy, in which correct and minutely judged and negotiated replies were necessary. What was said was distant from the real message. The irony is in the knowingness of that banality.

These are controlled and fixed ritual exchanges which display a wariness on both sides. Within this fixity it is possible for both sides to subvert the ritual. For example: two girls knock on the door of the class I am teaching. I open the door. 'What do you want, girls?' I ask. 'She wants a late mark' comes a voice from the class. My opening line was deliberately, among the possible reprimands available to me, welcoming: they had disturbed my lesson. The voice called out something which played upon my choice of wording and attempted to turn the situation into one of reprimand.

On the other hand, consider this comment:

Chris bumps into a door

Teacher just behind him: 'That's a door Chris'.

This time the teacher used something blatantly obvious to ironise a situation.

Three Kinds of Unofficial Literacies

I wish to make a distinction next between three kinds of unofficial literacies: those carried out in 'anomalous time' without subversive intent, those carried out within 'stolen' time without subversive intent and directly subversive activities in 'stolen' time. I have already mentioned the idea of anomalous time, time which is neither strictly the school's nor the students' but which occurs at odd moments

between activities, such as in a tutor period when students may have to sit and wait for the next lesson to begin. The kinds of literate activity I have witnessed in this kind of time are as follows: reading magazines such as 'Look In' 'BMX Action Bike' and 'Horse and Hound' (including the marking of horses for sale); looking at a sticker album for the film 'Short Circuit'; reading the newspaper 'Inky Fingers' for newspaper delivery boys and girls; reading '1000 Jokes for Kids' aloud to a group of friends; reading extracts, often cut out, from local or tabloid papers on particular issues, for example child abuse and murder which leads to a discussion of appropriate punishments; looking at a football programme with other boys, skimming, looking at photos and large headings. These activities noticeably refer to interests not catered for by the school, which are part of a history of childrens' culture (collecting and jokes), a teenage culture (teenage films, newspaper delivery, hobbies and sports) and a general popular culture (tabloid and local events, buying and selling, football).

The first common kind of 'stolen time' is that of cover lessons. The cover teacher has to take an often unknown group and get them to do work set by an absent colleague. This work will most frequently consist of writing activities. Students tend to see cover lessons, in the absence of their regular teacher, as not proper lessons. They therefore often consider it legitimate to use this time for their own purposes, including literate ones. I have noted in cover lessons activities such as pop quiz books, competitions in magazines and a game involving pairs of football teams played in a group with a die; throwing the die decides the scores. These are active pursuits designed to stave off boredom, group activities in the form of quizzes with a literate source, a book or magazine, cooperative and involving more writing than those done in 'anomalous time'.

The second kind of 'stolen time' is in lessons themselves, We could regard this as a first mild step into the subversive. Here students try to win back time by carrying on their unofficial literate activities in a game of risk and dare. Examples of these activities I have noticed are as follows: reading under the desk, my four examples were all girls, one reading a romantic novel and telling me, when discovered,

that there was a 'dirty bit', 'the bit where he rapes her'; two of the other girls were reading Judy Blume books, 'Forever' and 'Deenie' and the fourth Jackie Collins' 'Hollywood Wives'; a boy read a magazine, 'Air Gunner', quite blatantly on his desk during a lesson: three girls read an Avon catalogue while they were supposed to be listening and participating in a debate; a girl wrote letters, complete with envelopes.

In the cases of the romantic novel, 'Hollywood Wives' and 'Forever', we may notice the prevalent of sex as a taboo risked in front of teachers and the blatancy of the challenge.

Subversive Literacies

It is a short step for the informal literacies detailed above to become attempts to overturn what occurs in class. Here are some examples of how this may occur: three boys in an English cover lesson who are supposed to be writing a discursive essay by discussion and notes have a competition to make origami shapes out of the paper; a boy writes a series of answers and gets a girl to ask a series of questions – the answers of course do not fit and are deliberately hilarious, turning the idea of question and answer in schooled literacy on its head: into a wordsearch they are making up, students inset their own words and phrases, such as 'Five Star', 'Genesis' (pop bands), 'Silk and Steel' (album title) and 'Mongey', (nickname of a student in the class). There are risk and dare activities which try to win back space rather than time; for example, on the way out of a lesson students try to write their names on the blackboard without the teacher seeing. Like graffiti, this is literally inscribing oneself on the building.

I wish now to deal with three kinds of unofficial writing in more detail. These are: rough books, some further remarks on graffiti and finally the passing of notes in class.

Rough Books

Students are issued rough books by the school. In that sense they are school property. On the other hand they are an anomalous space because their contents are rarely read by teachers or policed. Only if a rough book is being used for an obviously subversive purpose is it confiscated and read. For these reasons, rough books are a kind of 'border country' where the official, in the form of notes, drafts and rough work from lessons, and the unofficial letters, graffiti, drawings, meet.

In this section, I will look at the unofficial writing in three rough books, those of a Year 8 boy, a Year 9 boy and a Year 11 girl. I must first say that the contents largely confirm the categories of graffiti in my pilot study. I divided these into ten categories: love and sex, pop music and pop culture, assertions of presence, greetings, swearwords and insults, school, identity and pseudonyms, political graffiti, threats to assault and unclassifiable items. In the rough books studied, the following categories were in evidence: love and sex, pop music and pop culture, assertions of presence and swearwords and insults.

I was able only to identify one further category of content and this was football. The other significant differences were in emphases and forms.

Football

There were three football graffiti in the rough book of Paul, the Year 9 boy. The first simply stated the name of a team: ARSENAL. The second was a territorial boast: 'A.F.C./THE GUNNERS/RULE'. The third was written by another student and establishes an absolute identity between student and club: 'Claire F./AFC/–x–' as with pop singers.

Differences in Emphasis

I suggest that differences in emphasis and form in graffiti in rough books are to do with their dialogic possibilities. It was obvious that books had been passed round and that graffiti in them had sometimes been written not by the owner

alone but by friends or by the owner collectively with other students.

In the three examples, there is an emphasis in which an assertion of presence becomes a glorification of the writer: for example, 'Rick C/the cool/bastard/wrote/ere so/this rough/book will/be worth/millions in the/future' (someone else had inserted the words 'of y fronts' between 'millions' and 'in'). This was written in the rough book of the Year 11 girl. The rough book also gives the writer a chance, as a further assertion of presence, to elaborate on his or her own name. In Paul, the Year 8 boy's, book, there were many different versions of his surname in different and complex versions of handwriting.

The dialogic possibility of the rough book gives rise to more dialogic forms. Let us take two examples. First, in the girl's book, there is a kind of word game written in alternate colours, red and blue 'Red/and/BLUE/by/Karen/and/Kirsty/and/Heidi/goodbye'. In the Year 9 boy's book, there is a dialogue written by two students and ended by a third:

1. How's your smelly
armpits Paul

Scott
2. PAUL WHO SCOTT

Paul
3. you, you Sodding turd

Scott
4. Don't call me a soddin' Turd

Paul
5. Whos going to stop
me arsewipe

Scott

6. me

Paul

7. Get your hands off my Book

Scott

8. Scott
   and
   Paul
   are
   total
   Turds
   Lloyd'

This is a mocking and ironic improvised game which mimes the escalation of an argument into a confrontation, defused by the final put-down. There is no telling if Lloyd actually wrote this or whether it is simply a device to effect this defusing.

In this section I have suggested that the categories I established for graffiti also hold good for unofficial writing in rough books.

Three Further Categories of Graffiti

After completing my pilot study I continued to collect examples of graffiti, but not from desks. In the ten further examples I collected, there were three new variations. The first would fit under the category of insults and swearwords or under the school category. It involved the direct insulting of a member of staff: 'Jackson, you fat flump'. It was written on a classroom wall. We notice that this graffito uses an area of discourse we have discussed before as a source of irony, that of little children's culture ('The Flumps' is a children's TV programme).

Secondly, I noticed graffiti which were direct sexual insults. On the back door

handle of the school, someone had written: 'HELLO/WANK/STAIN'. This was an obvious trick designed to shock the (male) reader as he gripped the door handle. There were also sexual insults to girls: For example, three surnames radiating around the word TART or the assertion: 'Lesley is a crip and a bisexual'.

Thirdly, there have been waves of graffiti in the school which celebrate anti-establishment stories or figures in the popular media. One example was sparked off by a campaign in the tabloid press about 'acid house parties' in which young people took drugs and danced till all hours to 'house', a form of dance music. This generational conflict symbol was then found, for example, chalked on the classroom doors: 'ACEEED HOUSE' (the word acid was pronounced this way in a record current at the time). These graffiti also brought with them their own backlash, presumably from those who wanted to be even more 'in'. One day the graffito 'Opera/House/in/ACID/out appeared on the blackboard. We notice the pun on 'house' here.

Notes Passed in Class

Further evidence of the nature of unofficial literacies is given in 56 notes and other unofficial writing passed or found in the classroom which I collected. This collection of artefacts reveals the same games of risk, dare and taboo played with graffiti. Messages have to be passed secretly, pieces of unofficial writing (longer than graffiti) have to be concealed from the teacher, the possibility of discovery is always present. In collecting this data then I, as the teacher sometimes had physically to wrest the note from the hand of the writer or recipient. Sometimes I would walk by and take it unexpectedly. Sometimes pupils amicably gave it up. Sometimes I had to use my judgement and sacrifice my data if the pupils showed too much anxiety or if I considered that by making a concession, a 'trade off', I could do the pupil a kindness by showing that I knew the game but, on this occasion, was prepared to waive the rules. Such a strategy on my part seemed to produce the result of making pupils less rather than more inclined to conceal their note writing on future occasions, as if I had tacitly approved their activity. The rules of the

game are clearly very strict.

I have already noted the characteristics of graffiti for a theory of alternative literacy in schools. 'Notes', as I shall call them for the purpose of shorthand, partake also in that zone of invisible time and space beyond the teacher's gaze which pupils appropriate. But in this case we are discussing writings on paper, a material which can be passed or thrown about the room within this stolen space and time. Hence the notes in the corpus show signs of having been folded into smaller squares, presumably to be passed without detection. Thus the political condition of their writing dictates their physical form.

Discourse Forms in the Corpus

An analysis of the corpus of notes reveals a remarkably small number of discourse forms in operation. These are:

1. Dialogue
2. Letter
3. List/questionnaire/round robin
4. Names
5. Drawings
6. Descriptions
7. Single Statements
8. Parodies
9. Tricks

It will be noted that in all but two cases (letters and descriptions) these are the same forms which occur in graffiti. Letters and descriptions are, I suggest, too long for the conditions in which graffiti are written which do not allow the development and length afforded by notes. Indeed, 'notes' are in many cases a lot longer than graffiti. This leads us to the hypothesis that the folk forms of vernacular literacy in this context are small in number and are transferable to several materials: paper,

desk, rough book, door knobs etc., within limits of space and time.

A second feature of these forms is that they are not mutually exclusive. Letters turn into dialogues. Graffiti-like single statements occur on letters.

Five Examples

I have selected 5 examples from the corpus which will allow a closer look at notes. These examples represent different forms. They are: a letter, a dialogue, a questionnaire, a description and a parody. I will look at their appearance, at what they say and then I will look more closely at their form.

Appearance

Pupils' strategy of appropriation of materials is clear in the five examples. The letter is on a torn-out piece of exercise book paper; the writer actually says '… as you can see this paper is from my German book – I thought I might as well put it to good use!!!' The dialogue and the description are on lined A5, the questionnaire on plain A5 and the parody on lined A4, all of which I gave out for rough work. In a sense then, the material has already been appropriated and subverted. Other examples in the corpus use these materials but turn them sideways or use torn pieces of them, as if further emphasising their new ownership. Four of these five examples show signs of having been folded, presumably for easier transmission between pupils.

At first glance, the writing on the five examples is conventionally placed. All but the questionnaire, which is on plain paper, use the lines of the paper. Even the questionnaire is still written in careful rows. Nevertheless, the letter, the dialogue and the parody have additional graffiti at unconventional angles, down the margin for example, or at 90 degrees and in a contrasting colour.

The handwriting on all the examples varies between print and longhand sometimes within the same word. Pen and pencil are both used. In the letter and the dialogue, the colour of the pen used signifies that a different person is writing. Thus we have red, black and blue biro. The parody is written in fountain pen.

What the Notes Say

Notes pose questions about intents and purposes. Unlike graffiti, some notes seem to have an actual and immediate function: to fix a meeting ('Are you going down pauls house with me at dinner') to repel advances ('Lee/Stop Staring at me./ You piss me off like shit does when you see it on the floor and you tread in it./from/Leah') or to convey information of a kind ('Sarah I have lost the Book Chapeau Rouge I am sorry but you will have to do it again. I am going to do it with nicola because she was away when we did it sorry but Mell').

What then do the five examples say? The first is a jokey letter from a girl writer and two friends to the writer's boyfriend. The writer says she is bored in the German lesson, that she has torn this paper from her German book, that two of them have just been 'done' (by me), that there are only seven minutes of the lesson left and that the writer wants a cigarette. This informational structure is punctuated with comments and interjections from the writers in a dialogue form ('Hi Benny Benj how are you, hope your muscles have improved. Luv 'n stuff Nadine'). There is an ambiguity here which gives the impression that the letter may never have been sent (if I had not confiscated it) but that it is as much a way of humorously and pleasurably stealing and passing time.

The dialogue, our second example, begins with one girl writer telling another that she may be pregnant because ' … its been 3 days all ready'. The reassurances of the second writer ('no its up to five days then panick') lead to a more humorous tone of speculation about relationships (' … well I wonder what you + Scott gett up to when me + paul are either in the kitchen or in the hall or bedroom!!') The dialogue ends with the first writer speculating whether the second writer is 'love sick from … John'. Thus the emphasis has turned completely from the first writer's apparent dilemma to the second writer's affections.

The third example is a parody questionnaire in which the questions in columns 1 and 2 have the same answer, hence trapping the respondent into joke confessions and insults (Do you like Summer?/Have you ever kissed anyone?; Name a cartoon character/What do you look like?) The tricks that the respondent would fall into

could be as follows:

1. Not being sure of their name
2. Having kissed someone
3. Swearing about having done so
4. Having children
5. Looking like a cartoon character
6. Having done something disgusting
7. Sleeping with someone
8. Having been taught how to have sex by their best friend

There are other tricks in the corpus: a sticker which says 'kick me up the bum please', a piece of paper which says 'who ever read this is a dickhead like Mr Jackson from?', a likes and dislikes list from a lesson on a piece of rough paper has words such as 'sex', 'love', 'hate' and 'bum' added, finally, a list of girls' and boys' names is followed by a checklist 'pealed licked sucked scwashed'.

The fourth and fifth examples, both written by the same girl, are a description of her boyfriend, a declaration of her love for him because of his appearance and strength, and a nursery rhyme parody of 'Mary had a little lamb'.

The Subversion of Form

The five examples both quote and subvert established discourse forms. The letter retains its beginning ('Dear Ben,') and signing off ('See ya around/Lossa love Juliet'). However the monologic form of the personal letter then becomes dialogic with the interventions of friends. This dialogism means that the 'message ' of the letter twists and turns according to the comments of each writer. The process of writing, the moment of its conception, contrasts thus with theories of composition and of drafting and redrafting in the official literacy of the curriculum.

The second example, the dialogue, also has a strange discursive flow, from the serious to the humorous. The questionnaire has a formal appearance with a subversive purpose.

The fourth example uses three forms – graffito, list – such as those lists of physical details of pop stars found in magazines – and a paragraph of description. The actual details though subvert the forms directly and coarsely ('Height = 5″8/legs = Georgeous/Bum = V. Tasty').

The fifth example is a poem set out with lines between the stanzas. Indeed, metre and rhyme are retained, but the form is subverted by the omission of 'taboo' words in the last two stanzas (Mary had a little lamb She also had a/Duck One day she put them/ on the mantle piece to see it they/ would fall off.') It appears that the writer knew, judging by the placing of capitals, where the line breaks were, but could not fit them on the page. The four stanzas have no connection in terms of content. Three are more a series of variations, while verse two is separate.

Multivocalism, Dialogism, Play

The ambiguity of purpose in these notes seems to me to be explained by the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia, for their form is in fact a clash or *bricolage* of language, a subversion of monologic meaning. These languages are: plain letter style ('At the moment I'm sitting in a German lesson ...) beat slang ('cool + trendy') taboo words – often in capitals or underlined to emphasise their taboo nature —('SEX', 'FAG', 'shithole', 'arse', 'bum', 'willy'), transcriptions of vernacular speech, both British (lossa, 'ave, ya [you]) and American (lurv) and nursery rhyme (Mary had a little lamb).

Within this ambiguity there is a second in that the writers are parodying themselves, what they write is not straight information ('cool + trendy' 'modest') and they also satirise or provoke their co-writers ('a freak with a high SEX drive').

This playing with language also involves distortion of spelling, some unintentional, but some intentional ('panick' 'gett'), puns ('... god this shithole is like 'colditts' [no that doesn't say what you fink it says!!]) and distortions and play with words ('Benjy Benj', 'chummy').

Punctuation is also appropriated from Standard English: exclamation marks

come in twos and threes; non-linguistic signs are appropriated (+, 7, >), abbreviations are used (v. for very) capital letters are omitted at the beginnings of sentences or are put occasionally in 'incorrect' places ('tickled my Bum') while a word such as 'god' is not given a capital; example five omits all punctuation except full stops; double underlining is also in frequent use.

I am suggesting then that, as with graffiti, schooled literacy is being deliberately and consciously subverted in every aspect of notes, from the material, the medium and the content to the form of the discourse. Notes are part of a popular culture of the moment which is alternative, subversive, playful, dialogic and fluid in its form.

It shares with graffiti the characteristics of the vernacular literacy which I outlined in my pilot study. Notes are engaged in voluntarily and spontaneously and they are read and written by several pupils, yet they are ignored or confiscated by teachers; they parallel graffiti in having love and sex as their chief concern; their language is a transformation and distortion of schooled monologic norms; they represent a knowing and skilled secret literacy culled from areas of 'forbidden' cultural knowledge: sex, swearing, slang, Americanisms; they comment ironically on previous stages of childhood and are thus a form of cultural tactics or strategy; they enable the trying on of identities; they are close to a 'culture of the signifier' of nonsense -common to schoolchildren's culture; they are indivisible from the culture which produced them; they give shelter to secret thoughts but in a public way; they play the game of insiders and outsiders with the teacher as outsider, but also with targeted pupils as outsiders; they involve the risk of putting oneself in print, because of the teacher may see them, but also because other pupils will read them; they are dialogic and invite collective creation and contribution in a carnivalesque assertion of popular literacy (Hodges, 1988).

In one important way however, notes differ from graffiti, whose authorship, as we know, is uncertain. Of the 56 items in the corpus, 39 are by girls, between girls or initiated by girls. This would seem to indicate that notes are an important feature of girl-culture in a secondary school and might play an important part in the negotiation of gender identity between girls and between boys and girls.

As we have seen in our example of the letter, the male recipient is set up as a kind of constructed audience before whom the girls perform straightforwardly, flirtily, satirically and as a blank screen to receive comments without much informative value ('I'm gasping for a FAG!!!'), perhaps even as a kind of fixed point or Logos. Girls are thus using a male audience also to discuss their subjection: their boredom in the lesson, their persecution by the teacher (!), the anomalousness of being made a prefect. In this sense the letter is also about power relations with the males who, to an extent, determine the girls' situations.

In the description, the boyfriend is recreated and considered on paper by the writer in a way which unites love and sex (I love DE DE uses a condom) and filters that description through three discourse forms in order to say what presumably cannot be said elsewhere except perhaps to other girls. Stanza two of example five is similar.

The dialogue deals with sexual politics ('Don't tell him he'll think you'd bonk anything and think you've been two-timing') just as other items in the corpus deal with the relationships between girls ('Leah, Look you know what I am like I piss around alot. I did not mean to wind you up ...') and with boy-girl relationships ('Craig/Tuesday dose want to go out with you because I asked her ...')

In the questionnaire which could have come from a male hand judging by the graffito on the back, the gender/sex theme is accompanied by a satire on identity or stupidity – not knowing one's name – and on ugliness.

Conclusion

Notes are, I suggest, part of the popular secret literacies of school pupils which are continually recreated and taught by each generation. They are part of a cultural process and as literacy are indivisible from their material origins in classroom and gender politics. As such, every aspect of their appearance and presentation is part of a social semiotic of their provenance, right down to the fact that they are folded to be passed and to the way the paper is turned or torn.

Notes are evidence of pupils developing skills in writing longer pieces of

discourse which include forms such as letters and descriptions which the national curriculum will require them to practise. If so how will teachers cope with the playful dialogism which is essential to this culture and whose root is a need to win back control and to give voice to real concerns as well as to win time and space in which to play as well as to work?

Summary

In my thick description of student subculture, I have looked for similarities with and differences from my pilot study of graffiti. I have established that my analysis of graffiti is broadly confirmed by my study of other subcultural literacies. In the light of my thick description, I have established additional features of subcultural literacies not covered in my pilot study. I summarise all the features of subcultural literacies below.

1. Subcultural literacies borrow from a) the traditions of anti-literacies in schooling, b) teenage subcultures, c) popular culture.
2. They are passed on through learning routes alternative to formal schooling, in particular in streets and playgrounds.
3. The subculture of a school has its own rhythms and rites of passage in tension and in dialogue with the dominant culture.
4. The functions of graffiti, for example risk, dare and taboo, extend to all school subcultural forms, including the non-verbal and uses of time and space.
5. The subculture has a common-cultural language with elements as in 1. above, in dialogue with the dominant culture.
6. This language has a rapid turnover in some of its catchwords.
7. This language includes complex ways of naming.
8. Strategies in the subculture for distorting, transforming, coining and reversing signify inclusion in the common culture but can equally be used for exclusion.
9. Student talk to teachers is characterised by a deliberate distance and irony which can become a fixed ritual.

10. There are three styles of unofficial literacy: those carried out in anomalous time and 'stolen time' without subversive intent and those in 'stolen time' with subversive intent.
11. Non-subversive subcultural literacies also originate in school, teenage and popular cultures.
12. Subversive literacies reverse, transform and dialogise official literacies.
13. There is an additional category, football, within graffiti which I did not include in my pilot study.
14. There are also extra emphases in unofficial literacies which I did not deal with in my pilot study. These are a) boasting, b) direct insulting of a teacher, c) sexual insult, d) the celebration of anti-establishment causes.
15. To the small number of discourse forms evident in graffiti, we can now add, from the study of notes passed in class, letters and descriptions.
16. Notes display additional functions for unofficial literacies. These are a) fixing meetings, b) repelling advances from the opposite sex, c) conveying information.
17. Unofficial literacies are a Bakhtinian heteroglossia.
18. Notes are largely written by girls and can be informative about the negotiation of gender identities using unofficial literacies. They appear to be a way for girls to subvert male power.

I have suggested that there are two styles of teaching and learning in MK School, both of which include kinds of literate practice. I have called these the technical and the dialogic. I have shown that the dialogic also includes student opposition. My descriptions thus far have resulted from an ethnomethodological survey of the school as a site for literate practices. I will now analyse the two styles, first the technical and then the dialogic.

6.4. The Technical Style

Within a town devoted to the promotion of the new, MK School offers, as one of its paradigms, a grammar school literacy based on the school's history as what

is best for its students. This style of literacy has, I suggest, three aspects: fixed roles, control of the external and moral good. I reiterate to the reader that my description of technical literacy must include my situated perspective as a teacher.

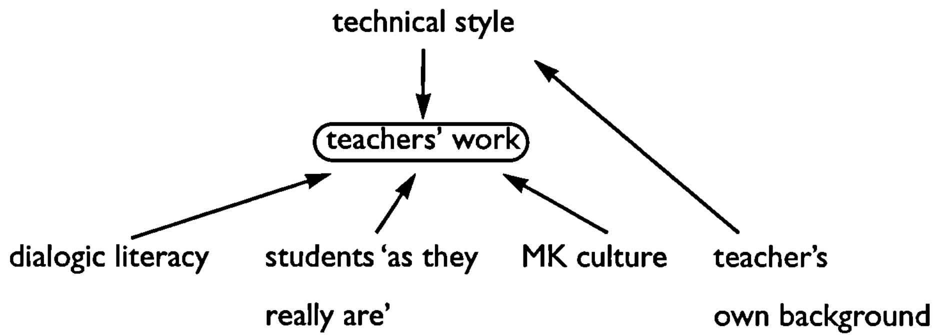
First, this traditional style, now supported by government pronouncements and directives on education, processes students without regard to their needs as individual learners or their intentions as developing rational beings. It is a style whose complexity of operation and maintenance leaves little time for reflection on what educational processes may or may not be taking place. Instead it offers preset roles for staff and students. As a consequence, other styles of literacy and other social roles become suspect. Both staff and students are forced to take up a position with regard to this style somewhere within the polarity of acceptance and resistance. Where there is resistance, I suggest, it is possible to take up apprenticeships in other kinds of learning offered elsewhere, for example in an anti-school subculture.

For the teacher, working within this style means that he or she feels pressured to be a receiver of instructions and a deliverer of these instructions within the curriculum in a relationship of power. If demonstrable results are the emphasis then all other forms of educating are devalued. Mixed-ability teaching is anathema to those who believe in competitive individual effort and in strong differentiation on academic and behavioural criteria. As Hammersley and Atkinson argue, 'strong' differentiation polarises students into pro- and anti-school subcultures and fosters an alternative literacy (1983 p. 24). By stressing individual achievement, support is seen to be an extra only for those with 'special needs' and is dependent on financial constraints and staff timetabling. Any version of Vygotskian support for all learners is devalued. This monologic view of literate activity is seen, for example, when students are asked to answer questions on a worksheet which gives no help with the answers and no reference sources; recent examples I have come across are in Music, 'what is a stave?' and in History where students were asked the meanings of 'penance' 'pilgrimage' and 'fasting', in neither case with any information or explanation.

For staff, the technical style becomes part of a hidden curriculum of profession-

alism. I suggest that this fixed role becomes a site of conflict for the teacher because his or her daily work is a kind of split culture where different irreconcilable factors are at play and mental pressures are therefore increased. These pressures I set out in the diagram below.

Figure 2. Pressures on teachers at MK School.



Teachers then have their own literate histories and academic backgrounds which may or may not coincide with the technical style. They are situated in Milton Keynes with its culture of newness and they are further placed within a conflict between styles of literacy in the school. Teachers find in their daily practice that the way the students 'really are' does not fit the kind of people they want them to be.

The technical style lends itself, I suggest, to control. It does this in three ways: control of image, control of information and control of external behaviour.

First it supports a public veneer of organisation and efficiency. The school finds itself caught between presenting a public face in keeping with both traditional and new conceptions of standards and dealing with or suppressing its internal conflicts. Within traditional roles it cannot contain new town students or new town culture and yet, paradoxically, it represents one aspect of newness in its espousal of these teaching methods and aspects of marketing and presentation now valued by a Conservative government.

Secondly, technical literacy works to control and encapsulate a literal flood of written or printed information. Computer systems were recently introduced as a

means of holding information on students, timetabling and exam results. These are in the hands of a new, highly paid small management unit, the Registrar's Department, which controls the budget under LMS, staff and student timetables, information about students and access to that information. Here again the new is put to the service of the old. Information is controlled by gatekeepers. They generate further floods of paper for checking by staff and students, for example exam entries and student's personal details.

The third aspect of control is that of external behaviour (which I have discussed on page 196 ff.). Literate practices thus become the site of tensions in the school. Students see this when they experience writing as control.

Control is justified by the use of hierarchies. Where students are setted, it is on the largely written evidence of exam results. It is implied, I suggest, that those at the top of the hierarchy of both students and staff have a monopoly on literacy and culture. Entry to the higher echelons includes evidence of the use of literate practices and for staff of the use of those practices for control. The world of work 'outside' the school has been depicted as an area of cut-throat competition where only a schooled exterior will be acceptable to employers. Thus it is implied, only those who abide by the control or the external will succeed outside let alone inside school.

When student behaviour does not match expectations of technical conformity then there are minor crises among staff. Conscious of the school's image they mount guilt-ridden campaigns to clamp down on aspects of external behaviour, from writing the date and underlining the title to control of movement outside the classroom during lessons.

The individual teacher is then forced to deal with perpetual personal anxiety about the organisational aspects of classroom management – regular checks on text and exercise books for graffiti, making sure text books are covered, not letting students out to the toilet except when absolutely necessary – all of which become part of the hidden curriculum of professionalism and common sense for the staff as a whole.

These frequent periodic clampdowns which result from a finding that students are somehow 'getting away with it again' seem to be carried out without the realisation that there may be deeper reasons for the cycle of technical control and student reaction.

The third aspect of technical literacy I wish to deal with, after fixed roles and control of the external, is moral good.

I suggest that adherence to technical correctness is judged to be right or good as opposed to wrong or bad. Thus technique becomes a kind of morality. Performance indicators are therefore signs of the rightness or goodness of the school. Students are, I believe, aware of this connection between technical conformity and rightness or goodness. For example, the right or good things to do in the care of an exercise book would be to: write neatly, put the date in the top right-hand corner, put the title at the top in the middle, not leave unnecessary spaces, rule off each piece of work, complete all work, hand the book in at the appropriate time, not tear out pages, write in pen, draw in pencil, don't use red ink, cover the book and not 'graffiti' it. Being good means adhering to these rules, being bad – or 'naughty' as the students put it – means not doing so. Students may be 'naughty' deliberately or out of ignorance. In any case, the teacher must always be seen to keep to his or her role of the good, otherwise he or she is weak or anomalous. Negotiation is seen as 'soft'. Students, given the choice, demand an excess of freedom, because, I think, they have not been used to constructive freedom in school. The teacher nevertheless is seen as weak if he or she does not use sanctions like detention to ensure that work is done. Students demand the framework of the good even though they wish to rebel against it.

For those who break the rules, literate activities are a major focus of resistance. This is a resistance to the technical style which can take the form of total rejection. It is a resistance which looks to alternative forms, including alternative literate practices such as graffiti, in which students can find their own paths. They would rather be 'bad' than be seen to participate in the respectability, approval, praise and official rewards which go with the technical style.

The unfortunate consequence of the fixed roles, control and morality associated with the technical style is that the resistance it sets up does not allow the legitimisation of the life of the mind in the school. Much that is not work in the technical sense is regarded as play in a frivolous sense. Students are not encouraged enough to inquire about the uses and value of school literacy and to use it to experiment with roles. In fact, punishment and a conservative staff culture limit student response. The development of critical and reflective skills is often subordinated to the demands of keeping the paper machine running. Staff are also tacitly discouraged from thinking and reading for themselves. The staff library is a rather dusty corner of one staffroom with a strangely mixed set of books. Reading for the job appears to be minimal except from necessity. Standards of literacy are not interrogated by those that demand them.

In their daily work then, staff and students operate in relation to the technical style. It may be accepted by some and not by others but it affects all. It exists in the people, in their language, in their practices, in their thoughts and intentions, in the objects that surround them and even in the architecture of the school.

Technical Mythology

What I now wish to do is to rename the technical style technical mythology. It could be called an ideology but I believe mythology to be a better term. By mythology I understand a delusive system which bears little relation to facts about literacy as I have observed and discussed them. I refer back to my discussion in Chapters Four and Five of literacy and culture myths. I make this distinction and rename thus because I wish to emphasise that a mythology can be a set of beliefs which are seen as common sense but which actually constitute a tissue of simplistic thinking and dubious logic. I ally myself thus with Gramsci's discussions of ideology. In Gramsci's terms the technical and the dialogic are locked in a struggle for hegemony. Further, I wish to draw a distinction between a mythology in Lévi-Strauss's sense in which the social practices of a group can be analysed to show the most profound and necessary foundations of a belief system, and mythology in the sense

used by the later Barthes in which mythology is a system of delusions. Nevertheless I intend in the next section to demonstrate that the method of finding binary oppositions in myths common to Lévi-Strauss and Barthes can be used in the case of the technical mythology and can thus deconstruct it.

I should first make the reservation that I am not simply dividing the staff, students or the literate practices of MK School into either/or, good/bad or technical/dialogic. The situation in this school as in any school is complex. However, the two styles I will characterise are drawn on within the practices of all. The best model may be that of Barthes (1977a). He writes: '... the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books ... the Text is a methodological field' (p. 157). Literate practices in MK School then necessarily have a relation to the 'methodological field' of technical mythology and of the dialogic style. As Text, the technical mythology includes the legitimised use of power to attain its goals. In its status, it represents the power of those who excel in particular literate practices and who are also those in charge of the means of production.

Advantages of the Technical

This mythology is a comfortable one for the teacher for it represents a relatively closed ordered system of common understandings and a common language. It enables a teacher to justify or explain his or her work to self and others. It enables new teachers to be inducted into the apparent common understandings of all. It provides an easily assimilable view of students and their motives and it is a way to justify methods of handling and controlling students in large numbers. It is a shared way to label, define and deal with those who are recalcitrant. It gives a teacher the security of consistency, of teaching within the same conceptual framework year after year; it gives the security of hierarchy, of knowing your place in the system. It enables measurement and assessment. It justifies the connection between school and the outside world; both are competitive. It enables the teacher to possess knowledge in a fixed quantity without insecurity. It enables practitioners to make a theory/practice divide and to contrast the hard reality of what they do with the

nebulosity and unreality of theory as taught, according to the myth, in training colleges. It thus connects with common-sense views of schooling held by employers, politicians and makes up one of the clashing paradigms present in the national curriculum. Its very explanatory power challenges the alternative view of schooling, what technical advocates call the 'child-centred approach', to justify itself. Ultimately the technical mythology appeals to a sensibility which needs the security of order, which is resistant to change, which is open only to limited complexity and which is comfortable within a hierarchy.

The Binary Oppositions

I want to suggest that technical mythology is based on a set of binary oppositions These oppositions are the mobile underpinnings of a logic which allows those who espouse the technical mythology readily to understand one another But precisely because of the oppositions I want to suggest that they fail to describe the school to itself or to the new town in which it lies. For this mythology represents a belief that in a new town the new must contain the 'best' of the old, the canons of literate behaviour of a selective system of educational endeavour. Yet, if, as I have suggested this mythology is but a pragmatic set of delusive beliefs, part of the myth of Milton Keynes itself is deconstructed.

I have divided the binary oppositions into two groups. In the first group movement is possible from one state to another. In the second, no movement is possible. The arrows indicate the direction of possible change.

Figure 3. Binary Oppositions in the Technical Mythology

The first group is:

low	⇛	high
animal	⇛	human
nature	⇛	culture

physical	⇛	mental
chaos	⇛	order
laziness	⇛	effort
play	⇛	work
group	⇛	individual
covert	⇛	overt
stupid	⇛	intelligent

The second group is:

bottom	⇛	top
student	⇛	teacher
bad	⇛	good
wrong	⇛	right
failure	⇛	success

The logic of technical mythology is achieved by uniting pairs of oppositions from the table above in support of statements about education and schooling. Below I try to set out the kind of thinking demonstrated at MK School in the technical style.

Those at the top are better than those at the bottom. Therefore the government can tell schools what to do and senior staff can tell staff what to do (top/bottom). Teachers though are better than students who are at the bottom of the hierarchy (teacher/student). This is why teachers deliver the curriculum to students and are not expected to think any further. Those at the top are not only the best but are also right whereas those beneath them are wrong (right/wrong).

The staff of the school is human/culture/mind/order while the students are animal/nature/body/chaos. The students have the task of moving from what they are to what the staff are. Ability or intelligence is biologically determined. There is a degree of leeway within the idea of ability but some quickly reach a natural ceiling and will never get above it. Thus some are more 'natural' than others, i.e. stupid

or 'thick', and because of their biology will never reach culture (culture/nature). All students have a chance to use effort and work but some continually lapse into their animal natures and have to be forced back. Those who are the most limited biologically, the most natural, will be the ones most tempted back into the animal state of play and laziness. Although the institution may be viewed as a team, each member is finally in competition with all other members and only individual effort is the final truth because that is the way of life outside (effort/laziness). You may even have to compete with yourself to outwit your animal nature in order to succeed (success/failure).

Like animals, students need to be trained to become human, although some are already more civilised than others. The uncivilised must be cultured. This is what schooling is for. Since teachers and senior staff are top, they know what culture is. Students generally have little or no culture or low culture (high/low). The most cultured have the most mind. The élite are associated with the pure, the unpractical, the Platonic (Medawar, 1969).

Teachers must always be wary and ready to enforce the training-in of the cultured and human because students' disordered animal natures will keep appearing. If they are allowed their head, particularly if they are allowed to participate in decision making, they would 'run the school' and mere anarchy would be loosed upon the world (order/chaos).

The method concentrates on externals, the inside is the realm of the mysterious, instinct, the unknown , the animal. Therefore we school or train the outside (overt/covert). We constrain the animal body with appearance, neatness, uniform and ordered time sequences making for punctuality marked by lesson bells (body/mind). We rely on external evidence, performance indicators, of training to show our success, for example, in spelling, grammar, uniform, exam results and behaviour.

'Our' successful students will be those whose biologically determined ability enables them to move quickly from animal/nature/body/chaos into the area of human/culture/mind/order. These will be the privileged who, in moving into the

realm of culture which is also that of pure mind, of conscious reason, will go on to be the intellectuals who will take the exams designed for the intelligent and who will go on to be the leaders of our society. Those who fail because of lack of effort or innate limitations, who do not therefore emerge sufficiently from nature/chaos/body will go on to be those who carry out the practical skills in our society. Therefore the complications of human learning are reduced.

It will be noticed that this mythology is also that used to justify superiority on grounds of race and gender and has a history in nineteenth century concepts of Social Darwinism. The technical mythology therefore has connections with networks of other historically and culturally created mythologies.

It is a crude and simple mythology obviously based on an educational pragmatism, on a largely uninterrogated and simplistic set of conclusions drawn from daily practice and teacher survival in a school with a traditional ethos. It is a kind of occupational mythology and, indeed, demonology. It does not involve new understandings, but old. It is about getting through the day. The oppositions represent the fundamental unquestioned assumptions which are a refusal to face implications. There is no chance to find a new literacy in this mental cul-de-sac. It is a mythology which, as I have shown, staff have to take into consideration in their daily work and which students half assume. In my discussion of unofficial literacy I showed how students subvert as well as espouse this mythology. As a logical structure the mythology is not watertight. I cannot guarantee that there are not other oppositions which could not be added to the list. The underpinning is then best seen as somewhat loose, perhaps as a group of 'floating signifiers'. Nevertheless, I suggest that the number of oppositions is limited and that they are all simplistic. I should also note briefly the bizarre results of applying this logic to staff. Although under the technical mythology the teacher's aim is to enculturate, that is to bring towards mind and intelligence, *staff* who reflect abstractly on their work are regarded as anomalies and perhaps outsiders. If body is divided from mind and theory is divided from practice, then for staff, practice is good and theory is bad. Reflective teaching may be allied with what is under suspicion as 'trendy' or 'left-

wing' thinking. It may destroy the enculturation process of students and endanger 'standards'. According to this logic then, these students who, say, aim to be teachers are being drawn towards a state of pure mind in order that they can be employed to forget it all and return to what is unquestioning and 'practical'.

6.5. The Dialogic Style

The alternative style in MK School has, I suggest, three main characteristics: an attitude to people, an attitude to learning, and an attitude to the text within a view of what school can do.

In terms of people, the dialogic style operates in those areas we could call personal, informal, social or relational. It can be found in those places where individuals or groups use dialogues with others and/or with texts to discover or derive something genuinely meaningful to them or to achieve aims whose practical usefulness is acknowledged by all participants.

As an area of personal discourse, the dialogic permits personal anecdotes, responses, accounts and stories. All these are valid language events to be shared. This discourse is an area where personal meanings are also exchanged all the time within the school without official status. It is a relatively democratic, cooperative, participative and consultative process, a never finished sharing and shaping. As such it may be threatening to those who demand closure and conformity. It may therefore include struggle and opposition. Put forward as a valid educational method it will threaten the paradigms held by some staff as survival mechanisms and will provoke evasion, suspicion or anger.

Whereas the technical style works on the principle of excluding the personal and the individual, the dialogic style involves an attitude to students as individuals. It is an attitude of equality, but *not* the kind of equality, called 'matiness' within the professional code, in which the teacher foolishly puts him or herself on the same level of experience as the student. This is rather an equality of *being*, a validation of the Other. The control of time, space and body, the tendency to treat children and adolescents as somehow contemptible and naturally 'bad' or devious, the

demand for unquestioning obedience from those who are simply units in a process, all these are replaced by or at least supplemented with respect for the learner as a person.

Discipline becomes a personal matter, not a matter of technical control. Unacceptable behaviour becomes a question of the student lacking respect for the teacher as a person, a person who has craft skills, a person whose own individuality demands respect.

The opposite also applies. The teacher becomes a listener as well as an addresser. The dialogue replaces the monologue. The relationship can thus shade into that of counsellor and client, the kind of snatched private conversations between teacher and student which one sees in anomalous spaces, a corridor, an empty classroom, an assembly hall still set from the morning's assembly or a bench outside the toilets, the kind of conversations which occur when the pastoral relationship is not being used for punishment. In brief, the dialogic relationship is what the theologian Martin Buber called 'I-Thou', the technical is what he called 'I-It'.

The second aspect of the dialogic style, the attitude to learning, stresses that learning is complex because it is a matter of internal change and concept development, not a means of influencing external behaviours. Within the kind of personal relationship which I have described above, the method of learning becomes a dialogue in which each participant is active in a process of making. The actions of body and mind are validated as means of learning, passive reception becomes invalid. The teacher, with his or her wisdom, knowledge, experience and teaching competence facilitates the student's learning. The teacher believes that any student can develop, but it is necessary to know where that student 'is coming from' in terms of gender, culture and identity. The student is credited with a developing intentionality, rationality and language competence. The teacher models and supports the learner who is an apprentice, but one whose current knowledge and opinions about the world are validated. Learning is thus an act of cultural making; hence literate activities are also seen as processes, not fixed adherence to technical procedures or moral good.

This brings me to my third aspect of the dialogic style, an attitude to the text within a view of what school is for. In a dialogic style, texts, written or read, are open. Reading and writing are not subjected to judgements of right and wrong but are the subject of negotiation of meanings within a process of change, criticism and redrafting. Meaning is only closed by mutual agreement. One side alone does not own the finished text. Response is a right and a necessity, it is positively invited not discouraged. Agreed meanings become a goal, not technical correctness alone. Facts and truths cannot arrive predigested. Test or exam success is not the immediate goal but consequences in thinking about the world or acting on the world will be. School is validated precisely as a site for these dialogic encounters with the aim of learning, not as a place for the reception of fixed behaviours.

Drawbacks of the Dialogic Style

The sensibility of the mainly dialogic teacher emphasises meaningful activities in the classroom prior to formal considerations. This teacher seeks to use materials which the student finds meaningful and to use them in a dialogue. The drawbacks of such an approach in MK School are several.

Among colleagues, the dialogic teacher may appear 'soft' or 'weak', bad at control or discipline. There is also a gender issue here: a female colleague told me that she feels her 'negotiating style' to be generally a woman's approach. Men's discipline often carries the implied threat of physical intimidation.

Students who have learned to expect the technical style, confuse dialogue and negotiation in classroom interaction with weakness in the teacher. They develop oppositional strategies to undermine this teaching style if they consider it inappropriate to the subject or, indeed, endemic to some subjects. Art and English teachers are more likely to have student consent for dialogic activities than R.E. or Science teachers in MK School. Students have a strong sense of appropriateness. Also, willingness to engage in dialogue diminishes the lower one goes down the 'ability range'. When students react against dialogic teachers, they also use the opportunity to jettison any work in the technical style they have been asked to do

by that same teacher. For example, they do not do homework and present messy or unfinished work, which seems to indicate that, without tight control, students will neglect all work they are not committed to. A 'soft' or 'easy' teacher is fair game, but he or she will also be told: 'You don't make us work'. Even in the open-ended work which students generally enjoy, the final products may be scrappy or incoherent because students have not learned and are not prepared to learn some of the competences required by this format. The combination of a meaningful and technically correct piece of work is a rare occurrence.

The dialogic teacher works within a constant ambiguity. The students try to take advantage in order to avoid what they are not committed to as meaningful. On the other hand, the dialogic style encourages good personal relationships. Often students say: 'It's not you, Sir/Miss it's just that I don't like the subject'. It might be thought that, in this situation, the teacher could act as 'demonstrator' and try to show the student how to 'get hold of' the subject. But he or she will not succeed even in this without students' prior commitment or assent. Students make global decisions about subjects in either/or terms. For example, they frequently say 'I don't know French' as if French were one thing which can either be known or not known, rather than, in school, a programme of language items which need not be learned cumulatively.

The Dialogic Style and the Binary Oppositions

The dialogic style will not be a +/– either/or model like the technical mythology with its simple and limited paths from one state to another. The dialogic needs different criteria. To illustrate this, prior to a description of dialogic thinking about schooling and literacy, I present again below the table of technical oppositions and place next to it a redescription in dialogic terms which discounts or blurs the simple technical logic.

Figure 4..A Comparison of Binary Oppositions in the Technical Mythology and their Redescription in Dialogic Terms

Technical			Dialogic		
low	⇛	high	-		
animal	⇛	human	human		
nature	⇛	culture	culture		
physical	⇛	mental	physical	⇚⇛	mental
chaos	⇛	order	structure		
laziness	⇛	effort	development and competence		
play	⇛	work	play	⇚⇛	work
group	⇛	individual	group	⇚⇛	individual
covert	⇛	overt	-		
stupid	⇛	intelligent	-		
bottom	⇛	top	-		
student	⇛	teacher	learning processes for both		
bad	⇛	good	-		
wrong	⇛	right	-		

I now, attempt to describe the kinds of thought processes which characterise the dialogic style. On pages 252–258 presented the technical explanation of teaching and learning. Below I will present the alternative explanation, the dialogic. I will take up each technical explanation made on pages 252–258 and balance it here with dialogic notions.

Education, including literacy, is the invitation to a dialogue, not to a transmission of knowledge This dialogue engages the learner in powerful activities whose context is wider than the school.

External technicalities are crude and ignorant devices in a learning environment. They are simply the observable product of mind/body processes which, if we attend to them, we are able to know. The dialogue involves the invisible, unprovable

inner realm. The constraints of school on time, space and movement are crude devices for forcing students into the role of being quantified and classified by externals. Internal processes are not ruled by bells and have little to do with sitting up straight, being in uniform or wearing the wrong colour trainers. What they have to do with is self-image, self-esteem and self-confidence, in fact with trusting oneself.

There is no natural/biological limit to ability. Students are not inferiors but human beings who need support as learners and respect as people. Top/bottom is not a law of nature. Rather development is a characteristic of being within society and culture which we all are. Success in dialogic terms is the widening of one's view of the world by inserting oneself into a learning situation and by taking learning into oneself, assimilation and accommodation. Being at the top can be a matter of class, race, gender, power, privilege, influence or conformity. This is true both of school and of the so-called 'real' world outside. This world is as much a schooled world as school itself, a world with its own mythologies. School is then a good place to learn such truths.

Those at the top are therefore not always qualified to be there. The teacher's job is not to be top but to facilitate wisely so that the learner develops. The teacher who does this is worthy of respect for a competence based on experience and reflection. The teacher's knowledge-in-action is a good indicator of children's needs and their learning methods *as long as it is not formulated in terms of the technical mythology*. Teachers can themselves learn by sharing experience in dialogue with others and by planning together in a team.

The curriculum must offer meaningful experiences. 'Motivation' is really interest and engagement. The student needs to inject his or her competences as a meaning maker into the curriculum and know what learning is good for, what is possible for real purposes. 'Laziness' is a fault of the curriculum not of the student.

The curriculum is not then simply material to be transmitted because it is not neutral. It too is socially/culturally located because it presupposes a method, a place and a time. Learning is a dialogue and should be active and experiential. The student must be allowed to make mistakes, to begin from his or her own develop-

mental level and to proceed towards autonomy. Support from teacher and other students means that 'mixed ability' classes are the only socially just system for all to be able to learn. Cooperative tasks are also learning devices. Concentration on 'mind' in the technical mythology means that the physical is alienated and returns as subversive behaviour and inarticulate protest. The human being is a mind/body for whom thinking, physical activity, manipulation of materials and practical knowledge and play must all be part of learning.

The school should encourage critical awareness to allow students to select out the trivial and shoddy in culture in order to 'write' rather than 'read' it (Barthes, 1975). Immature behaviour on students' parts may be a direct result of an authoritarian ideology which both denies students' rights and participation and which does enable them to exercise basic democratic rights.

Classroom teachers are not, even if they think they are, training instinct. They are using power to set limits and to create consent. But this power is partly the power of their personality and experience. The relationship with a class needs ultimately to be dialogic within the teacher's own limits and style. The best teachers' discipline is themselves. Teachers grow into this role, just as students grow into the dialogic role of limit testing which leads to respect and a relationship with the teacher as a person, but a different adult person. Teachers relying purely on external authority will be seen through and challenged.

The dialogic approach in its complexity is a threat to those who espouse the simplistic technical approach. It threatens the control exerted by official methodologies of schooling and by their supporting complex networks of paper and the technological means of its production.

Why then is the dialogic a minority rather than a majority approach? There are, I suggest, five reasons for this. First, the dialogic acknowledges that we live in a complex social world. Culture is not the aspiration to an élite status but a possession of all, a complex set of social practices in which people actively work together, engage in dialogues and develop and change existing structures. Secondly, the dialogic allows teacher and student to choose, negotiate and to inject the personal

realm into the rigidities of the curriculum. It therefore threatens vested interests. Thirdly, this dialogue relativises 'truth' which becomes 'truths' and as such fluid and negotiable. Fourthly, mutual support threatens the philosophy of hard individual self-sacrifice by suggesting that groups can be as powerful as individuals. Fifthly and lastly, the acquisition of 'really useful knowledge' threatens those who wish to control without threat of criticism (Johnson, 1979).

The only power wielded by the dialogic comes when official documents demand it. But this is never in an uncompromised form. The English statutory orders and the national curriculum cross-curricular skills, themes and dimensions are followed because they are legally required, but they themselves are compromises between approaches. Thus in MK School the conflict will continue.

Ultimately because the entire psychological (personal, developmental) and social (relational) realms are excluded from technical mythology except in a crude behavioural sense, the dialogic remains unexplained. Because it is unexplained, it leaves staff, and indeed students, with a false consciousness The dialogic is dodged and avoided. It is part of what 'we don't want to get into' because we have too much paper work to do. It is the realm, perhaps of Staff Training Days ('a waste of time') of staffroom philosophers ('Why haven't they got any work to do?') and of intellectuals ('What are they doing in schools? Surely they should be in a better job? Anyway, they're too soft on the kids, too "nice"). Students also make the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' (or 'easy') teachers. Unfortunately for such critics, I contend that the dialogic is always going on in MK School, despite the technical style. It cannot be quieted either in staff or students because it is the way in which people actually interact either within their group or within themselves. This realm can be ignored, taken for granted or deliberately excluded from teachers' minds because of the very crudity of technical mythology. I have learned that in trying to explain to myself and others my disagreement with some of the methods used in MK School that I must go back to some very basic categories of thought which I had taken for granted and unconsciously made part of my own thinking. In this case, I believe, staff and students ignore all aspects of the *social*.

Conclusion

I have argued that within the complex day-to-day teaching and learning in MK School, two broad and conflicting styles, which involve literacy, are simultaneously in play. What I have called 'technical mythology' is presented by teachers and accepted by students as a powerful and practical way to succeed at school. Even if students do not succeed, they accept that technical practices and correct behaviour are the way they *should* succeed. The technical mythology requires formal correctness justified by 'common sense' and past experience rather than being based, by teachers, on reflexively considered principles of teaching and learning literacy. I said that such 'common sense' views also oversimplify the complexity of literate activities. What I have called the 'dialogic style' can be seen in classrooms where dialogues, talking and listening, are given priority as meaningful activities, where personal relationships are valued and where tasks are negotiable between teachers and students. I argued that the dialogic is powerful, not in the sense of the power of the technical mythology which promises success through conformity, but as a means of learning. I have shown that, in MK School, in those situations which matter to school policies and practices, technical methods have been the touchstone of practice, yet the dialogic style is always a greater or lesser part of all teachers' and learners' styles. To see the two styles as a simple either/or is to fall into the kind of simplified thinking seen in the technical mythology. The range of literate activities in MK School is open and complex. The technical and the dialogic are parts of what teachers and learners of literate practices in the school do.

Literate activities are one area where students will try to find ways to undermine teaching. One way in which they may do this is in unofficial literacies which are dialogic and oppose the technical style. I argued that literate practices in MK School have not harnessed the full power and range of pupils' competences in reading and writing and that some of these unused competences can be seen in examples of alternative literacies such as graffiti. At worst, pupils or staff who, officially or unofficially try to demonstrate the power of dialogic styles may be met with repression.

As a teacher-researcher, I can write this thesis as an alternative kind of literate practice. It is a powerful activity in that I can describe to myself the whole range of reading and writing activities in MK School and make sense of them so as to understand some problems I had in my teaching there and how my situation might have been improved. But writing this thesis does not mean that anyone will listen to me.

6.6. Summary

1. The Technical Mythology

The premiss of the technical mythology is that knowledge is fixed. The literate practices and forms by which it is received are also fixed and belong solely to institutions, including schools. Both knowledge and literate practices are part of a traditional historical line which represents the accretion of the 'best' of human culture. Knowledge of this culture determines one's respectability. This knowledge is contained in books. Therefore books are the centre of the curriculum.

The curriculum reflects the autonomy of knowledge. Academic aspects, being fixed, are separate from the pastoral, which deals with the individual. Academic subjects are the forms of knowledge. Knowledge has an intrinsic value. Subjects can be further subdivided into discrete facts with appropriate techniques for their presentation to and reception by students. The role of the teacher is to represent the specialist knowledge of the discipline.

To receive knowledge, students are to be processed in the same way. Because this is so, it is possible to have: a rationally planned building, a fixed system of dividing time and space (the timetable), imposed codes of demeanour, bodily management (seating, punctuality, timekeeping, attendance at lessons, a system of bells), surveillance to ensure the correctness of students' timekeeping, location, demeanour and bodily position. Student opinion is dismissed as irrelevant.

The most important aspect of the psychology of students is 'ability'. Ability is a quantum ranging from a lot to a little. Those with only a little ability need special help to acquire even a little knowledge. Students are therefore in a fixed relation-

ship to knowledge. Knowledge is to be received passively, preferably by memorising (rote learning) or copying.

Teachers, who know everything, hand knowledge down. Their roles are part of a fixed hierarchy with power concentrated in the most senior staff. The teacher's other major role is to operate the system of paper management, the systems of record keeping, reward and punishment which control the passing down of knowledge. Professionalism among teachers is the operation of the handing down process. It is easy to demonstrate the student's success or failure in receiving knowledge because the tasks performed and the technical details necessary to them are either right or wrong, for example in the formal correctness of writing. The proof of learning is exterior, in test and exam results which prove success or failure. These results publicly demonstrate schooling and standards. The major medium proving success or failure is the written word because this is the medium of knowledge itself and the books which contain it. In tests and exams, students work individually in competition with each other because school sorts out students by ability and determines their future rank in the school as well as their future place in the world.

There are four effects of the technical mythology:

1. Students and teachers prefer to be uncritical because adherence to rules without rationale is equated with goodness and success.
2. New learning techniques and technologies are not exploited for their potential as new ways of learning but are fitted into the pedagogy of the technical mythology.
3. The simplicity of the technical argument obviates more complex explanations about what happens in literate practices in the classroom.
4. Conformity coexists, even in the same mind, with nonconformity. Ambiguity is created in staff and students. Status depends on technical success but the subversive is created at the opposite pole. There are constant crises as the subversive waxes and wanes. Interest in the technical and one's place within it exists simultaneously with practice of the dialogic.

2. The Dialogic Style

In the dialogic view of teaching and learning, knowledge must be brought to life afresh by every knower through his or her own efforts (Bullock Report, 1975 pp. 47–50). It is an incomplete process of learning. Language is the ordinary means for generating knowledge and producing new forms of behaviour. Language is learned and used in social contexts. Learning only takes place where it is created through dialogue, is owned by all participants and is found meaningful. We represent the world to ourselves, selectively and generally, through language and construct a framework of knowledge of the past and hypotheses about what might be. Children take language from adults, use words to generalise about an increasing range of their own recurrent experiences, master the rules of language and, through interaction with their own mental and perceptive powers, develop new and higher forms of thinking. Higher thought processes involve the child looking back, with language, on his or her own formulations. Dialogue allows speakers, listeners, readers and writers to work on their own contributions and is thus a powerful mode of learning (Bullock Report, op. cit.). A child alone can work on his or her own utterances in an internal dialogue.

The cultural contexts where dialogue occurs are plural, that is they involve groups or individuals with different backgrounds, genders, cultures and purposes. Literacy is one factor in these encounters and, as such is continually re-invented within broad limits for different purposes. The school enables students to engage in a dialogue with the process of culture in different learning situations. Meaning in these situations, including the encounter with texts is negotiable and closure occurs only when participants agree to finish. This tradition of thinking, learning and understanding has been drawn together from diverse sources within the discipline known as English Studies. The search for knowledge and the willingness to go where that search leads mean that one particular kind of social or cultural worthiness cannot be projected *en bloc* on to learners. School practices are *one* set of practices which coexist with and overlap those in the world 'outside'.

If learning and culture are dialogic processes then the curriculum must be built

on the idea of dialogue. Learning must carry with it the right of response and the initiation of discourse including criticism and interrogation. Curriculum planning involves consideration of how the students use the tasks and materials put before them for their own purposes. In the learning situation, this means that there is negotiation of exact tasks, outcomes and deadlines. If learning is a dialogue owned by staff and students, then the academic and the pastoral, that is the formal and the personal, are blurred. As a means of engaging in a dialogue which fosters learning, speech returns to prominence beside the written and printed words. Books are a part of the dialogue and therefore one element in a whole *language* process. This kind of curriculum deals with meanings in bigger 'chunks' than discrete facts and definitions. The teacher models learning to the student and students model learning to each other, therefore the curriculum is built on mutual support as a strong foundation.

The search for meaning and the relationship within a dialogue between teacher and student generates a kind of consensual discipline defined by the task in hand and by mutual respect. Learning is not an exact fit with technical arrangements such as timetable slots and bells, but the concrete situations in the school can be studied and set up or improved on as effective dialogic situations. The techniques implied here would come under the heading of flexible learning, workshop techniques or supported self-study.

The student's individuality is validated by the dialogic style. Learning is a complex active engagement by that individual in a dialogue with others with the aim of developing psychological understanding, concept development and growing competence. The aim of modelling by others is to develop independent learning as a goal. There is no fixed horizon to anyone's learning as long as their tasks are meaningful. The measure of their learning is what students are beginning to do.

In a dialogue, the teacher becomes as much a skilled listener as a contributor. As such, the teacher can learn from students and from the process of learning and he or she ceases to be the sole source of information. Students can learn from each other, other adults or a variety of reference sources. The teacher's role therefore

becomes a maintainer of communication, not of a paper machine. The dialogic situation therefore works against the fixed roles of student and teacher embedded in technical tradition and allows experimentation with roles by both. This will facilitate personal growth in student and teacher.

Professionalism is the proper facilitation of learning; the student has an entitlement to meaningful tasks which involve the necessity of a response within a dialogue. Within the student-teacher relationship which necessarily follows, the teacher should respect the student as a person, as having equality of being. This will mean catering for individual learning needs and hence different ways of learning. This will entail a willingness to begin from the student's existing competences viewed in the context of the student's class, gender and culture, ideas, interests and intentions, practices and prior knowledge. Modelling as a learning strategy involves cooperation with others, not isolation, it enables the student to reflect on how a task is done and how someone else does it and then to help present a theme to an audience which is concrete and known rather than an anonymous and invisible examiner. In the carrying out of tasks, there is not a restriction to either right or wrong but the chance to discuss, adapt, draft and redraft. The texts involved in the dialogue will not be didactic but will aim for the sharing of personal experience so that students can reflect on their own and others' experiences as of equal significance. Meaning within such a task is not directly related to formal tests and examinations but is a way for the student to judge whether school fits the world. Tasks are judged by their facility in allowing students to act in the world and to reconceive the world.

The dialogic, *when it is not promoted to all as the proper basis of learning*, goes underground. It becomes an unofficial literacy which occurs in the interstices between official activities semi-covertly or covertly. This will involve a struggle for the dialogic to reassert itself because it is the norm of human social intercourse. The dominance of the technical devalues the personal but the complexity of justifying the dialogic means that dissenters who can articulate it as a valid educational alternative will encounter conflict within a school.

6.7. Student Literacies: A Trawl for Information

Scope and Aims of the Investigation

In the last section I looked at the styles of literacy in MK School from an ethnographic viewpoint which necessarily foregrounded myself as participant observer. In this section I will triangulate my own perceptions with students' accounts of literacy.

There are 6 aims to this investigation:

1. To find out factual information about students' uses of literacy.
2. To find out students' 'home-made models' of literacy.
3. To see if the technical and the dialogic are factors in students' lives and thinking.
4. To see what is the range of student literacies.
5. To see what horizons of literacy are offered in students' perceptions by Milton Keynes and by MK School.
6. To see how much students will let a teacher-researcher find out about their literate practices, particularly those not connected with school.

One limitation of this investigation is that it is on a small scale. This was necessitated by pressure of work as a full-time teacher, by limitations on time for carrying out research in school and by limitations on time for the analysis of such research.

Description of Procedures

I decided to investigate students' perceptions at *transitional stages* in their school career. At these points, I believed, students would be able to assess more clearly what their literacy was doing for them. I therefore investigated classes of students in Year 8, who had just arrived at the school and a class in Year 9 just before option time.

There are four parts to the investigation:

1. A trial questionnaire administered by myself to my Year 8 tutor group.
2. A research questionnaire administered by a colleague to her Year 8 tutor group.

3. A research questionnaire administered to her Year 9 tutor group by another colleague.
4. Six interviews which I carried out with 6 members of the tutor group in 2. above.

In 4. I also used the evidence of reading diaries kept by those students.

Questionnaires seemed to me an efficient way to establish factual information about students' backgrounds and uses of literacy and a way to discover their reflective understandings of literacy.

All three questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions which were intended to produce responses from students which would display the categories they applied to literate practices. This has given me the problem of having to devise tables and charts to display this information after the event.

All three questionnaires were administered to existing tutor groups and not to specially selected samples of students. This was because tutor groups themselves are selected in MK School to contain a balance of male and female students and a balance of black and white students. The number of black students in MK School is less than 10% and the sample will reflect this proportion.

I must say immediately that I am now aware of faults in my questionnaires and that they may therefore be considered somewhat thin. I wrote them largely in response to my own priorities without sufficient consideration of the information required, the format of the questionnaire and the methods for analysing the results recommended for example by Bell (1987).

Because of the limitations of the questionnaires discussed above, I offer the trawl for information which they represent as a kind of pilot study. I will try to present the results to the reader as a *picture* of student literacies (Goulding, 1987, p. 103).

In retrospect, I see that the questionnaires, interviews and diaries which I used for my research with students were not only devices for trawling for factual information about students' actual literate practices both in and out of school. They

were also ways in which I could see how I, as a teacher-researcher, could enter the realm of the interpersonal, of the dialogic. As someone whom the students might see placed within the technical style I was trying to see how far students would allow me to go in finding out about their dialogic literate practices and also how far dialogic practices such as interviews and diaries could be used as tools of research.

The initial questions for my empirical work on overt literacy were: could I demonstrate that the technical mythology is part of students' practices and of their models of schooling? Could I show that the literacies in and out of school, overt, semi-covert and covert, were in fact dialogic? Could I, as a teacher, enter their lives enough to locate the area of the personal?

The Trial Questionnaire

The questions in the first questionnaire were as follows:

1. What have you read in the last 24 hours?
2. What have you written in the last 24 hours?
3. Why should people learn to read and write?
4. If you had the choice, would you?
5. Should everybody be able to read and write?
6. What was the best book you ever read?
7. What would you like to be able to read that you haven't yet?
8. How good are you at reading?
9. How much better do you wish you were?
10. What good will reading and writing do you in the future?

The trial questionnaire was administered in a tutor period by myself early in the Winter Term of 1986. I briefly explained my research and asked for the students' help. The class consisted of 24 students. There were 11 boys and 13 girls. Of the boys, two were black and one was mixed race. There were no black girls.

The Results of the Trial Questionnaire

1. I tabulated the results of each question
2. I reordered these results so that the answers fell into three subject blocks:
   a) factual information (Questions 1,2 and 6).
   b) conceptions of literacy (Questions 3,4 and 5).
   c) literate horizons (questions 7,8,9 and 10).
3. I rewrote the results in table form in order to summarise what students had written under simpler categories. This was in order to present a general picture of their answers. This involved listing these simplified answers either:
   a) in order of frequency, that is most to least,
   b) as a range, that is, for example, good to bad.
   This rewriting was only unnecessary in the case of question 6, which was a list of specific books.
4. In my simplified tables I listed the results of the total number of students but also I listed results by gender. This was in order to see if gender differences were a factor in student literacies.
5. Six boys and two girls failed to complete the whole questionnaire. I have categorised these missing answers as 'blank' in the tables. I have also listed as 'blank' those occasions when a student left out an answer from an otherwise completed questionnaire. Where I think this omission of an answer is significant, I have said so in the text.

I set out below my results under the headings of the three subject blocks I have outlined.

Factual Information

a) What have you read in the last 24 hours?

The table which I drew up to summarise students' answers (Table 6.1) emphasises two significant aspects: the *range* of material read and the *frequency*

with which students mentioned certain kinds of materials.

Table 6.1 Items read by students in the last 24 hours.

Category	Subcategory	Boys	Girls	Total
School				
	subject-related	15	36	51
	general	3	6	9
Newspapers				
	in general	2	3	5
	tabloids	1	2	3
	local	2	0	2
	TV page	1	2	3
Magazines				
	in general	1	1	2
	football	2	0	2
	TV	2	0	2
	pop	0	1	1
	teenage girls'	0	2	2
	'Bride'	0	1	1
	'Slimming'	0	1	1
Television				
	in general	1	0	1
	subtitles	0	1	1
	teletext	3	0	3
Fiction Books		0	4	4
Product Wrappers/Packets		0	2	2

Covert Literacy		0	2	2
Comics				
	in general	1	0	1
	'Beano'	0	1	1
Other				
	computer	1	0	1
	car	1	1	2
	football	1	0	1
	puzzles	0	1	1
	cinema	0	1	1
	'story'	0	1	1
	prospectus	0	1	1
Total		37	70	107

The significant aspects of these findings are, I think, as follows. School-related items were mentioned more times (60) than all the others kinds of items put together (46). Girls mentioned nearly twice as many items as boys (69 to 36). For girls, school items were again mentioned more times than the rest put together (42 out of 69). For boys, school items accounted for under half of the items mentioned (15 out of 36) but no other single category had more mentions than school.

It appears from this data as if newspapers, comics and magazines are read equally by boys and girls, but in the case of magazines there is a strong gender division. Boys and girls read none of the magazines mentioned by the other sex. Among the other items it is possible to suggest that boys tend to the more traditional or sex-stereotyped kinds of material (teletext, football, computers). It should be noted that one girl did list a car manual, which is a non-stereotyped choice.

Girls mentioned more different categories (13) than boys (8). In particular they mentioned fiction books, which no boy mentioned.

b) What have you written in the last 24 hours?

In this table also (Table 6.2) I drew out both the range of writing and the frequency with which students mentioned different categories.

Table 6.2 Items written by students in the last 24 hours

Category	Subcategory	Boys	Girls	Total
School				
	subject-related	45	52	97
	general	2	8	10
Other				
	puzzles	0	2	2
	Sea Cadets	1	0	1
	'my book'	0	1	1
	letter	0	1	1
	'story'	1	0	1
('Teletext'		1	0	1)
(i.e. answer put in wrong section)				
Totals		50	64	114

It will be noted that school related items were again mentioned more times (107) than all the other items put together (7). They take a much larger proportion of the answers of both sexes and the number of other categories is much reduced from that of reading. Boys recalled three-quarters (50) as many items as girls this time (64).

The number of other categories was roughly equal (3 to 4) and yet none of these other categories was common to boys and girls and one of the boys' categories was a misplaced answer. On this evidence there is a gender division outside school.

Girls and boys were involved in writing fiction ('story' and 'my book'). As 'story' was listed among school items on the original answer sheet it is possible that both

these tasks could be additional school items. Girls appear to undertake kinds of writing (letters and puzzles) which boys do not.

c) What was the best book you ever read?

I present below the tabulated answers to this question. I did not think it helpful to reduce these books to categories:

Table 6.3 Students' choice of the best book they have ever read

Book	Boys	Girls	Total
'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole'	1	1	2
'Gremlins'	1	0	1
'Ghost busters'	1	0	1
'Tripod 2: The City of Gold and Lead'	1	0	1
'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe'	1	0	1
'Liverpool Book 85–86'	1	0	1
'Stig of the Dump'	0	1	1
'Forever' – Judy Blume	0	5	5
'Maggie' – Lena Kennedy	0	1	1
'The Naughtiest Girl is a Monitor'	0	1	1
'One Day You Will Go'	0	1	1
'I prefer reading magazines'	0	1	1
answer left unfinished	1	0	1
blank	4	2	6
Totals	11	13	24

It will be noticed here that boys do read fiction out of school and that the items listed here which are specifically books favour girls (10) more than boys (6). Boys and girls only shared one book, 'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole'. Whereas 1 boy and 2 girls read 'classic' children's books, boys appear to read science fiction and sport whereas girls prefer romantic fiction.

Conceptions of Literacy

a) Why should people learn to read and write

In this section I was looking for students' 'home-made models' of literacy. From the tabulated answers to this question I therefore counted the reasons given. As same students gave more than one reason the table (Table 6.3) contains the number of reasons not the number of students.

Table 6.4 Students' reasons for learning to read and write

Reason	Boys	Girls	Total
to get a job	4	8	12
would be thought stupid	5	1	6
understand everyday written materials	3	2	5
made to by teachers	0	1	1
would be left out of things	0	1	1
blank	2	0	2
unfinished answer	0	1	1
Totals	14	14	28

I think it is significant here that whereas girls thought that getting a job was the main reason for literacy learning, boys were more concerned with the name-calling and the reputation that would result from being illiterate. They had colourful names for this situation, 'div', 'gorm' and 'wilf'. Girls called this being 'thick'.

b) If you had the choice, would you?

I categorised students answers to this question as follows:

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
yes	9	8	17
probably	1	1	2
sometimes	0	2	2

not sure	0	1	1
blank	1	1	2
Totals	11	13	24

The majority of both sexes here answered in the affirmative, although more girls than boys were equivocal about this question.

c) Should everybody be able to read and write?

The answers tabulated in Appendix 5 show that students not only gave yes/no answers to this question but also gave reasons for their decision. In terms of agreement or disagreement their answers can be summarised as follows in Table 6.6.

Table 6:6 Students' opinions on whether everyone should be able to read and write

answer	Boys	Girls	Total
yes	10	7	17
should be given choice	0	1	1
doesn't matter but still important	0	2	2
no	0	1	1
blank	1	2	3
Totals	11	13	24

Again there was a rough agreement that literacy should be learned but once again girls were more doubtful than boys.

As students also gave reasons in their answers I have drawn up an additional table (Table 6.7) which lists these reasons. Several students gave more than one reason so that the totals below represent reasons given and not numbers of students.

Table 6.7 Students' reasons why everyone should be able to read and write

Reason	Boys	Girls	Total
would be thought stupid	3	3	6
understand evade written materials	2	2	4
live/communicate with others	1	2	3
no reason given	1	2	3
would be left out of things	1	1	2
speak properly	0	2	2
keep historical records	0	2	2
to get a job	1	0	1
it's nice to	1	0	1
could cause an accident otherwise	0	1	1
havoc in the world otherwise	1	0	1
blank	1	0	1
unfinished answer	0	1	1
Totals	12	16	28

In comparison to Table 6.4, there is a greater range of reasons here (10 as compared to 5 in Table 6.4) and these are now more evenly distributed between the sexes.

Literate Horizons

a) How good are you at reading?

In this section I was concerned to find out what further developments for their literacy students could see both in and outside school. I began by using student answers to find out their estimation of how good they were at the present moment. I regret my emphasis on reading only in this question. I believe I should have included writing as well as reading horizons here.

Table 6.8 Students' estimations of how good they are at reading

Estimation	Boys	Girls	Total
very good	2	1	3
good	0	1	1
quite good	2	5	7
not bad	1	3	4
not very good	0	1	1
blank	6	2	8
Totals	11	13	24

It will be seen that in this class which the school calls mixed ability, only one student judges herself not very good at reading. The rest of those who completed their questionnaires judged themselves within the range of 'not bad' to 'very good'. Perhaps the 6 boys and 2 girls who failed to get this far in the questionnaire are demonstrating insodoing that they do have literacy problems, but we cannot assume that this is the case. The largest proportion of the students called themselves quite good (or synonyms for this: see Appendix H).

This would seem to indicate a perceived zone of proximal development, something which is confirmed in the next table (Table 6.9).

b) How much better do you wish you were?

Table 6.9 Students' opinions of how much better they would like to be at reading

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
a lot	2	2	4
a little	1	6	7
stay the same	2	1	3
don't know	0	1	1
blank	6	3	9
Totals	11	13	24

Students are indicating here that they do see room for further development in reading. As 6 boys did not complete the questionnaire, I suggest that the *majority* of both sexes show in these answers that they want to improve.

c) What would you like to be able to read that you haven't yet?

When students were asked specifically in this question what they could see themselves reading the answers were less certain.

Table 6.10 What students would like to read that they have not yet read

Item	Boys	Girls	Total
languages	2	6	8
'Confessions' books	2	0	2
Encyclopaedia	1	0	1
read better in general	1	0	1
blank	5	7	12
Totals	11	13	24

We note here that as well as 5 boys and 2 girls who did not get this far in the questionnaire, 5 other girls were unable to answer this question. That is, *they did not know* what they would read next. One boy was vague, wanting to 'read better'. Of the rest, I was amazed by the number of students who saw foreign languages as the next threshold. In my experience, this is one of the subjects which, in school at least, alienates many students first. Boys' horizons were sex-stereotyped: factual books and the sexist and transgressive 'Confessions' series. Girls all chose languages or nothing.

d) What good will reading and writing do you in the future?

This question perhaps poses the broadest question in terms of literate development. It asks, what is the furthest horizon of your literacy? I set out a summary of students' answers below (Table 6.11). I include answers written by two students

who I think must have misread the question because they mentioned sporting achievements. I have added up the different answers given – some students gave up to three – and the totals reflect this.

Table 6.11 Students' opinions of what reading and writing will do for them in the future.

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
get a job	1	6	7
pass exams	0	2	2
be able to read and write	1	1	2
read subtitles etc. on TV	0	2	2
read signs	0	2	2
communicate with others	0	2	2
sports achievement awards	2	0	2
read and write letters	0	1	1
enjoyment	1	0	1
an awful lot	1	0	1
blank	6	3	9
Totals	12	19	31

The answers reveal a *lack* of any sense of different horizons offered by the school or Milton Keynes. The two answers which do not fit the question, from two boys, speak of achievements which, significantly I think, have little or nothing to do with literacy. The rest are either vague, 'an awful lot' or retread the reasons already set out in Table 6.4 and 6.7. Again it is the girls who emphasise jobs and exams while one boy alone offers 'enjoyment' as his reason, the only time it was mentioned in the entire set of answers from this group.

Analysis and Discussion

Let me restate here the aims of my investigation: to find out factual information about student literacies including their range, to find out students' home-made models of literacy including their literate horizons and to see if my division between the technical and the dialogic is detectable in students' own accounts of their literacies.

I will analyse the results of the questionnaires under 4 titles: School, Outside Literacy, Gender and Home-made Models of Literacy.

School

School dominates students accounts of reading and writing. We need to take into account here the fact that the questionnaire was answered in a classroom, in a school, at the request of a teacher. On the other hand, the teacher was their tutor, the person with whom they have a more dialogic relationship and the answers were written during the anomalous period of tutor time, neither a lesson nor free time. With these provisos I think it still fair to say, simply from numerical evidence, that school reading and writing play the largest part in students' literate lives. It is noticeable also that schooled reading and writing is of particular kinds. In Appendix 2, students mentioned the schooled forms of notes, bar chart, exercises, Greek writing, questions, work from the board and essay. Only two forms mentioned, 'letter' and 'Saxon News paper' are the same as the things they read and write outside school.

Outside Literacy

What is striking about students' outside literacies is their range. A complete list of these would be as follows:

Newspapers
Magazines and comics
Television
Fiction books

Product wrappers
Covert Literacy
Computers
Car dashboard/manuals
Football programmes/books
Puzzles
Cinema signs
Prospectuses
Letters
Outside organisations (Sea Cadets)

This range covers a variety of genres, styles and rhetorics and shows that students possess a range of different reading skills. Writing however appears confined largely to school work.

Gender

There are notable gender differences in what students said about reading and writing. It appears that girls read more than boys both in and out of school and that out of school girls read more different kinds of materials. Outside school in particular there are both shared genres, TV, magazines and newspapers for example, and more gendered kinds of reading, the technical, science fiction, boys magazines and 'sexy' books for boys, girls' magazines and romantic fiction for girls.

Writing is still dominated by school for both sexes and the amount of writing that both do is more equal, from this evidence, than reading. Outside school there may be more gendered kinds of writing, those connected with organisations (Sea Cadets) for boys and letters and puzzles for girls.

Home-Made Models of Literacy

Despite their range of competences, students' conceptions of the uses of literacy were what I have called mythical, that is based on a simple logic related to the

'technical' demands of schooling because they are meeting the idea for the first time. Their ideas tend to be of three kinds. The first I will call *pragmatic* in that it centres on what practical advantages literacy can have outside school. It will get you a job, allow you to communicate with others, to live in society and to avoid dangers by reading public notices. Students overvalued literacy to the extent that they confused it with oracy and said it would help you to listen and speak 'properly'. This reasoning also omits the value of literacy in the school except as an agent to allow you to achieve these pragmatic purposes.

The second idea is based on *social shame*. This involves the confusion between literacy and intelligence (discussed in Chapter Four). Being literate allows you not to be thought stupid, especially, I would suggest, in school, which classifies your intelligence by your literate practices and decides your place in the system as a consequence. The illiterate are social pariahs and inferiors. Illiteracy would result in social havoc. This last idea equates literacy with reason, culture and civilisation (also discussed in Chapter Four).

The third idea is based on *power relations*. Some students showed doubts about the uses of literacy. It was said that teachers force you to learn to read and write. Yet the majority of students said they would learn to read and write if given the choice and that everyone should. We must balance this view though, I think, with the reasons students give for literacy learning: pragmatism, social shame and power.

Literate Horizons

The majority of students were positive about their own literacy skills. They were conscious of a horizon, if a small one, despite the wide range of rhetorics they already commanded. Even in a new school, however, they seemed to have only a limited conception of what horizons were now possible for their literacy.

This indicates to me that school had offered students few further, new or unknown horizons. Apart from foreign languages, which to many were a comparatively new subjects, students could see no change from their previous school and

no universes of discourse ahead between the secondary school where they would have to fit in by being literate and the world of work and adult life where they would have to use their literacy for pragmatic purposes.

General Conclusions

My hypothesis, based on this questionnaire. is that although students, at this transitional stage in their school careers and in this new town, have a wide range of rhetorics at their disposal, they interpret literacy as largely a matter of *schooling*. Tasks in school are defined largely by subject, 'French', 'History', rather than by what precisely has to be done in that lesson. Students compartmentalise and separate off from the 'outside' the largest part of their literate experience. The extension of this interpretation of literacy as schooling is that students conceive of the general psychology and purposes of literacy in schooled terms. Reading and writing are valued above oral skills. Literacy is seen to be so powerful that it can even cause speech and listening to be done 'properly'. Schooled literacy is seen to contain both spoken and written Standard English. School is seen to expect a specific language use. Literacy, because it is institutionalised powerfully in the school, can be seen to be its own justification. It is somehow natural, not cultural. You read and write in order to read and write because the school or the teacher says so. Importantly, literacy, which students seem to think is learned in *school*, helps you to get on in *life*, to communicate with others and to fit in. Students then measure not fitting into society also by schooled standards and schooled logic. Illiteracy is stupidity.

Students' command of a general range of rhetorics tells a different story. It suggests the uses of literacy for enjoyment, information, consumption, following hobbies and interests, communicating with others and making things work. That said, it also shows that although students have a variety of rhetorics in common, some are leading in sex-stereotyped directions. I suspect that students viewed their literate horizons also in schooled terms. Thus they had little idea of what schooled literacy could advance them towards. Their suggestions were either academic –

languages and encyclopaedias – or transgressive — 'dirty books', something deliberately *contrary* to school's perceived purpose.

Again though, the range of rhetorics at students'. disposal reveals a popular *culture* which includes literacies. Students diminish the importance of this culture in their minds because they are thinking in schooled terms. Their conceptions of literacy are thus in conflict with their practices. To them, their 'outside' culture does not seem a resource.

Students' *personal* reading horizons also appeared to be lacking in any sense of the universes of discourse which might appear next Their favourite books indicated an experimentation with roles beyond those of the 'pupil', but these were sex-stereotyped or backward looking. Boys' ambitions to read the 'Confessions' books show that the transgressive and the sexist are the horizon leading to experimentation with a certain narrow kind of male sexual identity.

School is there and demands that students fit in. Students see this and what school can do for them as reasonable goals for literacy but they have little conception of alternative worlds in school even if they have some narrow conception of them outside school.

In terms of the technical and the dialogic, the limitations of a questionnaire gave little indication of the place of these styles in students' lives and work. What can be seen in these results is the dominance of schooled reading and writing over all other forms. More personal activities were revealed only occasionally in girls' letter reading and writing and in girls' reading of graffiti.

Hypothesis from the Trial Questionnaire

The results of the trial questionnaire have produced hypotheses about student literacies which will need to be tested against the two research questionnaires which follow, the interviews and students' written accounts of their literacy.

These hypotheses are as follows:

1. School dominates students' definitions of reading and writing.

2. Nevertheless, students possess a wide range of competences within a popular culture which includes literacy.
3. There is a strong gender division in students' uses of literacy both in and out of school.
4. Students' home-made models of literacy are firmly based on schooled literacy and its accompanying literacy myths.
5. They have few literate horizons either in or out of school.
6. Dialogic uses of literacy are harder to 'get at' than technical uses for the teacher-researcher. This may he because the teacher-researcher sets up adult models, categories from observations which the children do not have.

I will now consider the first research questionnaire.

The First Research Questionnaire

The first questionnaire was longer than that used in the trial (Appendix G). I did not at the time feel that the trial questionnaire had provided enough detailed information about the culture, in the broadest sense, of which literacy in Milton Keynes was but one part.

This questionnaire was administered by a colleague to her tutor group also in 1986. She explained briefly its purpose and its connection with my research. The class consisted of 29 students, 14 boys and 15 girls. All the boys were white, there were 3 black girls and one of mixed race. The limitations discussed on page 2 also apply to this questionnaire as do the methods of analysis. As with the pilot study I have divided the answers into three subject blocks. Because of the large number of questions this time however I have subdivided the first subject block. Another difference is that I have put the tables of results in the appendices (Appendix H) since I have shown my method in the trial questionnaire. This time I intend to summarise and comment on the results here without tables-

I have distributed the headings and the questions as follows:

1. Factual Information
   a) Family, Dwellings, Early Reading (Questions 1–4)
   b) Uses of literacy outside official schooled literacy (Questions 8, 11–15, 16–18, 21–30)
   c) Cultural context: hobbies and outside activities (Questions 10, 31–43)
2. Conceptions of Literacy (Questions 45–48)
3. Literate Horizons (Questions 5–7, 9, 19, 20, 44)

Factual Information

a) Family, dwellings, early reading

From Tables 6.12–6.14. we can make the following observations. Most new town inhabitants are among the first generations to live in purpose-built environments which did not exist before 1968, the new estates of Milton Keynes. The remaining students live in communities which are more historically rooted. Over half the class had been resident in Milton Keynes for most of their lives. A substantial number had moved into the city during the course of their lives. The city is still new, there is mobility of population and building continues. This is part of the students' cultural background.

These recent new town dwellers had very little idea of the origins of their families. Of the places named, those in England are very close to Milton Keynes (London, Hemel Hempstead, Northampton) with the exception of Newcastle.

The original idea of the city as a focus for London's overspill population is somewhat borne out by these results. However, the rest of the places named show that Milton Keynes is now attracting those people from Great Britain and from the ex-colonies who have been on the move for a hundred years or more, the Irish, the Scots, Afro-Caribbeans and Asians. The city is clearly a *new* focus for these people's aspirations. In general then, the results demonstrate a diversity of literate cultures, but a diversity which has a pattern based more on locality and on traditional migration patterns than on the relatively new factor of London overspill.

It will be noted that school has been the major site of learning for both sexes, with home the second and one student having tried alone. If we count the mentions of school and home (Table 6.15), we find that school is mentioned 23 times, home or parents 13 times and self once. It would appear then that in students' perceptions school is the major site of literacy learning.

b) Uses of literacy outside official schooled literacy

I make the following observations from tables 6.16–6.36. Student's general perspective on literacy outside school is both diverse and utilitarian. The most important aspect was not present indeed but future: getting a job. In their everyday life, students see literacy as useful for getting around – reading signs, notices and going shopping – and for personal communications such as letter writing: this now for both sexes, unlike Table 6.4. Books play only a small part in reading which also includes magazines, newspapers and represents, I would suggest, the area of reading for relaxation. One student even claimed that she does not use literacy at all outside school. In no case here (Table 6.16) do we get the impression of literacy as something powerful which can open up worlds. More detailed questions (Tables 6.17–20) produced evidence of great diversity within leisure reading. There was a wide variety of newspapers, comics and magazines and it is fair to assume that students have a wide range of competences for reading them. For all but three students there are books at home which may be their own if not their parents'. When it comes to favourite books, the main point here is, I think, the sheer diversity of what students can read and what they are beginning to read. (Tables 6.24–6.26).

Library use is relatively high among students (Table 6.27). Students read a diversity of library books and have a range of competences outside school.

The majority of students buy books for themselves (Table 6.31) although we should remember that the word 'book' means magazines or part-works to some of them. Thus they do acquire reading materials of their own volition outside school. The frequency of book-buying varies considerably from every week to once a year (Table 6.32). W.H. Smith is the most popular place to buy books.

Newsagents and general stores in the estates are other locations (Table 6.33) for books and magazines. It would appear that buying books as presents is a family matter too. Relatives, particularly grandmothers, buy books as presents for birthdays and Christmas (Table 6.35). Students read items not connected with school very frequently (Table 6.36).

c) Cultural context: hobbies and outside activities

In what kind of culture then are the reading and writing habits of students outside official schooled literacy located? I have also placed the answers to Question 10 here (Do you read what other pupils write? If so where?) because it was designed to gain information about graffiti and other unofficial literacies. The majority of students denied reading others' writing at all, which is unrealistic considering that they are surrounded by this writing all day at school. My supposition is that they got wind of the implication of the question, unofficial writing, and closed ranks. Those students who answered differently seem to have scoured their minds for sites where they come across other students' writing. Only one girl spoke openly about graffiti (Table 6.37). Boys offered a smaller range of sites and denied in greater numbers that they saw any writing at all.

Only 6 students out of 29 claim they do not listen to the radio (Table 6.38). The overwhelming majority of programmes listened to are pop music (Table 6.39). Students' hobbies are extremely varied but physical pursuits count for 46 of the 61 mentions of activities (Table 6.40). 21 out of 29 students have access to a computer (Table 6.41). Favourite TV programmes are again varied although soap operas account for 21 of the 52 items mentioned (Table 6.42). Nevertheless students are clearly adept at a large range of rhetorics on TV. The majority of students' favourite music was pop (Table 6.43). Visits to the cinema were fairly frequent (Table 6.44). Students had recently seen a wide range of films again showing a mastery of a variety of rhetorics (Table 6.45). This is again demonstrated by students' favourite films (Table 6.45). 22 out of 29 students watch videos (Table 6.47) and a variety of genres are watched (Table 6.48 and 6.49). My question

about whether students like badges or labels on their clothes was only answered in the affirmative by 16 of the 29 students. Again I suspect that this question seemed to them in same way intrusive and that, as with the question on graffiti, they were being defensive. Perhaps in a school with a uniform which at one time banned clothes with logos this was too sensitive a question.

Literate Horizons

Students thought that literacy was useful in life either for general help, for work and education of for communication (Table 6.51). 28 out of 29 would learn to read and write if the choice were given (Table 6.52) and 28 out of 29 agreed that everyone should learn (Table 6.53). Their conceptions of the result of universal literacy were fewer jobs, more jobs, more writers and politicians, less need for school, the beginning of other kinds of learning or nothing at all! 27 out of 29 students thought that they were above average at at least on of the two literacy skills (Table 6.55) which begs the question of the difference between their view of themselves and that of teachers. Only half of the students wanted to be a lot better (Table 6.56) which raises the further question of what kind of activity they conceive 'being better' to be. Do they conceive it solely in schooled, even technical, terms? Table 6.57 confirms that their ideas of what literacy can do are very limited. 6 students were insulted by what they thought was a silly question (How do you think reading and writing will help you at this school?) The rest cited lessons, homework, technicalities such as punctuation, jobs, exams or vague ideas such as 'helps a lot'. Only two gave specific areas where literacy might enable development: that it would help them to read a lot more and that they could learn study skills. Table 6.58 shows that ideas about whether literate demands were different from middle schools again showed few specific views. 12 out of 29 students thought it was no different at all. Others were vague 'a lot harder' 'a bit better' 'more mature'. Of the few specific ideas, reading was considered harder and longer, writing harder, longer and faster. Other views were contradictory (neater/not so neat).

In Table 6.59 we see the routes for reading that students saw in front of them. Briefly, these were 'blank/don't know/can't remember' for 13 students out of 29, magazines, teenage novels, Asterix, horror film tie-in books, childrens' classics, memoirs and science books. This list is reasonably diverse but I think disappointing in its apparent lack of awareness of the available universes of discourse. I would make the same comment about Table 6.60 where students were asked what they would like to read that is too difficult now. 24 students thought of nothing at all. One gave an oblique answer ('it's not difficult it's hard to understand') and the only four routes given were whippets, Dickens, Lord of the Rings and science books. Finally, students saw literacy helping them when they left school only in work, education and then in other vague ways ('a lot') (Table 6.61).

Gender

My evidence confirms that there are both shared and gendered literacy areas outside school. A more detailed summary of these features would be as follows. More boys than girls cited school as the major site of their literacy learning. This could be a gendered response which denies the role of the family in their learning. With the teaching of literacy and the giving of books as presents as well as the purchase and availability of print media, the family emerges for both sexes from this information as a strong alternative site of literate activities with parents and other adult relations as strong props and role models.

Boys' interests in non-fiction reading are here largely linked to physical activities such as fishing, and skateboarding and to an interest in machines such as computers and transport. Girls interests in non-fiction would be pop music, fashion and animals. Boys also read more comics than girls, both of the 'Beano' and 'Dandy' type and those linked to 'male' activities such as war and football. Both sexes read approximately the same number of newspapers. It is only girls however who seem to be making tentative moves in the direction of more complex kinds of non-book reading such as 'Discovery' magazine and the 'Times'.

Boys appear to exercise a stronger choice over their reading matter when

purchased. It is more likely for girls to have items bought for them or to read things already in the house. Girls however appear to get more support than boys when it comes to having reference books bought for them. A connection could be made here tentatively with girls' success in language at school. In terms of enjoyment and use of books, interest and humour appear to prevail for girls whereas boys are again shown to prefer books about hobbies. This again confirms the connection between boys and 'facts' or the 'outer' while girls appear to read for the 'inner'. Additional areas of interest in fiction were however shown in Table 6.29. Boys also like space books and girls like love stories. Another interesting point is that students here also cite books which belong to a previous or 'younger' stage of reading, such as 'Beano Annuals', 'Blackberry Farm' or Enid Blyton books. In terms of 'outside' reading the revisiting of earlier books is a more frequent process, it seems, than in some of the models of learning which emphasis straight progression. In terms of shared interests C.S. Lewis and Roald Dahl were the only writers held in common. The horizons of reading otherwise led boys towards fantasy and horror and girls to older classics and teenage fiction such as Judy Blume's 'Forever'. Girls appear to frequent libraries more than boys and may therefore read more books (Table 6.28), although, when they do visit libraries, boys take out more books at a time than girls (Table 6.29).

In the areas of unofficial literacies and outside culture boys denied in greater numbers than girls that they read other students' writing (Table 6.37). In hobbies, physical pursuits were the most frequent activities mentioned by both sexes. Girls were rather more adventurous than boys in their radio listening, boys stuck to a strict diet of pop music or nothing. Only girls cited areas which we might call 'the arts' in their hobbies, reading and music for example. Girls also collected more than boys. Boys were more in the area of doing and making, modelling, computing or breeding animals. Both sexes however had access to computers at home. There were significant gender differences in TV watching, 16 girls but only 5 boys watched soaps. In music both sexes liked pop music but only boys were straying into the more adventurous, but 'male', areas of rock and rap. Students went to the

cinema in roughly equal numbers for the two sexes and both preferred comedies over all other sorts of films or videos. There were however routes preferred by one sex in this area, girls mentioned romance, music, teen films, fantasy, ghost and 'weepies' and boys science fiction. Boys were less eager than girls to discuss the wearing of badges or labels on clothes. They are clearly more guarded about areas of possible subversion. Horizons for both sexes were, on the evidence of their opinions at least, limited. Specifically in terms of future reading boys mentioned only Asterix, horror and magazines, girls mentioned science and pop biography and memoirs. When asked about texts too difficult to read at present boys mentioned none at all. Girls said Dickens, science and Tolkien.

Discussion and Analysis

a) Gender

Although there are shared areas of activity, gender differences became clearer in this questionnaire. Boys denied the 'inner' qualities of literacy, emotion and closeness. They connected the uses of literacy with physicality and fact and with the transgressive (horror, for example). They have fewer progression routes than girls in any area of culture except music.

Girls were more interested in literacy for the 'inner'. They had more varied progression routes than boys in all areas except pop music.

b) Other areas

Briefly then, the first questionnaire confirms the dominance of the model of schooled literacy in students' minds but not in their practice. The mass of extra information about the background culture of students shows that they have command of a vast number of other areas of activity many of which involve literate skills. We are now enabled to see the culture in which their literacy is set and compare it to the narrow technical view which they have been schooled into. Students in the first questionnaire confirmed the pragmatic as the aim of their literacy learning rather than social shame and power relations which were emphasised

in the trial questionnaire. Again they were positive about their own literacy skills but showed limited conceptions of the horizons of their literacy.

Conclusion

The evidence of this questionnaire confirms all the hypotheses on pages 295-6 When looking at the second questionnaire in the next section we need to see how these views have or have not changed over time and whether there is any significant, additional information which arises.

The Second Research Questionnaire

The second questionnaire was shorter than the first. This was because of the complexity of the data which had resulted from the first questionnaire. Four questions were different from those remaining (Appendix I). Question 4 was a new question which was designed to give the range of occupations of parents and therefore some idea of the relevance of class to the survey. Question 8 asked students how literacy had helped them thus far at MK School and question 9 asked how literacy had helped in the option decision. This was because the questionnaire was aimed at Year 9 students. In question 17 I amalgamated all the questions about hobbies and outside interests in one.

This questionnaire was administered by another colleague to her mixed-ability tutor group in 1988–9. 12 boys and 13 girls were present. One boy was black, one girl was Italian. The rest of the students were white. The limitations discussed already also apply to this questionnaire. I have grouped the questions for analysis according to the model on page 297 The tables are in Appendix J (6.61–6.83).

The headings and questions are as follows:

1. Factual Information
   a) Family, Dwellings, Jobs, Early Reading (Questions 1–5)
   b) Uses of literacy outside official schooled literacy (Questions 10–14)
   c) Cultural context: hobbies and outside activities (Question 17)

2. Conceptions of literacy (Questions 19–22)

3. Literate Horizons (Questions 6–9, 15, 16, 18)

Comments

This questionnaire confirmed the findings of the pilot study and the first questionnaire in all areas. In the first new question little was revealed by the questions about parents' jobs except that the majority involved manual work, only 3 parents were white collar or professional. The question about literacy and options (Table 6.79) revealed that students had, overwhelmingly, no idea about any possible connections. Only two students had the idea that literacy might be more complex at exam level but they could not say specifically how. The major difference in the answers to this questionnaire however was not in the answers themselves but in their style. There was a nasty sarcasm which had not been present at all in the pilot study or in Year 8. Students, boys in particular, seemed to be using this as a protective or blocking mechanism. It demonstrates an attitude to official literate activities, of which this questionnaire was perceived to be one, which shows how some students have become increasingly alienated from official literacy.

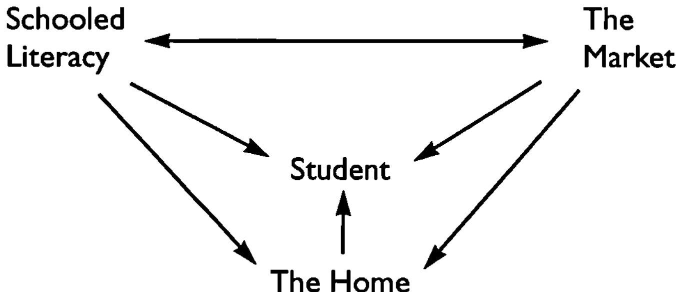
Gender

The second questionnaire confirmed the findings on gender of the pilot study and the first questionnaire. There was also new information which shows how the gendered directions for literacy outside school have now become, in some area at least, more exaggerated. Girls had begun to read more teenage magazines such as 'My Guy' by this age while boys were reading more about computers and cars. New directions for boys were satirical magazines such as 'Oink' While boys read murder mysteries and went further into the fields of fantasy gaming and science fiction, girls were aspiring to the gothic romances of Virginia Andrews. For the first time girls also listed shopping as a hobby.

Comment on the Three Questionnaires

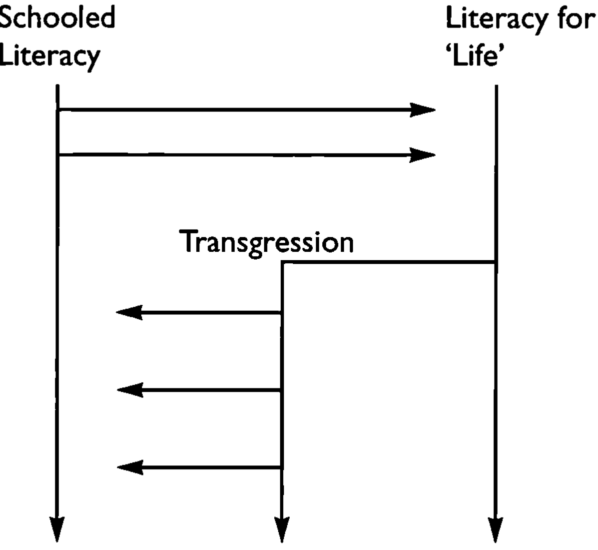
As we have seen in the results of all three questionnaires, Year 8 and Year 9 students' out of school activities incorporate *simultaneous* involvement in areas which we might consider 'older' or 'younger'. A student may be reading the 'Beano' and teenage fiction, and watching horror films or reading Enid Blyton and Judy Blume, and 'Bride' magazine. I have traced some areas where 'progression' is possible, for example Year 9 boys' new interest in satirical magazines and girls' interest in the novels of Virginia Andrews, although it is not clear if this is actual progression, a short-lived fashionable interest or an addition to a plurality of literate abilities. Significantly, there was almost no evidence of voluntary involvement in any school subject for its own sake, except for Science in the case of one female student. It appears that there are strong processes at work which are drawing students, despite school, to areas of competence in the 'outside' world of literacy, for example letter writing, and to areas of leisure reading, for example magazines and popular fiction, which they will adhere to as adults. School is almost an unwanted extra in this process and the idea of study or the life of the mind as a rewarding area to explore seems not to exist here as a coherent route. Transgression is an element in this situation because some of the out of school interests, such as horror films or love stories, are not approved of by the school. Transgression as an 'other route' is also, to an extent, an *anti-schooled* route. At two important stages of their school lives, beginning secondary school and choosing options, students have already divided 'school' from 'life' and yet use the ideas of technical literacy to judge literate activities without any further interrogation of what literacy is or does or where it can lead. Market forces are more powerful than the school but family and home also play an important part as the site of 'natural' and useful literate activities. I have summarised these findings in Figures 6.4 and 6.5.

Figure 5. Literate Influences on Students of MK School



Arrows = Directions of Influence

Figure 6. Relationship between Schooled Literacy, Transgression and Literacy for 'Life'



Arrows = Directions of Influence

It is arguable of course that the family is infiltrated by the market. However, there are long historical traditions of family-based activities, which coexist with the market and with the influence of school, such as teaching children to read, letter writing and gendered role models for literate activities, in fact a popular literate culture. The utopian vision of Milton Keynes discussed in Chapter Three is, in fact,

a culture dividing school from life while promoting schooling as a way to climb the rungs of society. Schooling has been imported in to the new town setting, in the case of Milton Keynes. as an uninterrogated example of what is 'best'. It is not, however, 'new', at least in the minds of the pupils.

The Limitations of Questionnaires

In the next section I will present and discuss case studies of six individual students from the class which filled in the first questionnaire. These were all Year 8 students. My intention was to triangulate these studies with my own reflexive account of the technical and the dialogic and with the rests of the questionnaire. There were four reasons why an extra dimension was needed:

1. A questionnaire is not dialogic in that it does not connect the researcher with the student as an individual. An interview would therefore give more leeway for this relationship within the limits of the teacher-student roles. As Bell notes, interviews will also provide evidence of feelings, motives, tone of voice, facial expression and hesitation (1987).
2. Interviews will provide evidence of the situated perspective of the individual in his or her relationship with a culture. Questionnaires may give more general trends and structures rather than individual perspectives.
3. Questionnaires will not necessarily give sufficient detail about what an individual does with his or her literacy.
4. Interviews and questionnaires provide 'ideal', or indeed anti-literate, data '... because they are rationalisations [they] have an uncertain relation to actual situations' (Silverman, 1985 p. 16). Questionnaire data 'can only produce a very partial understanding of the processes of interpretation through which such structural factors are subjectively understood (ibid. p. 77). It is 'packaged information' but 'as structuralism teaches us, elements (like questionnaires) have no meaning or value in themselves. Only when articulated with other elements do they acquire a positive or negative value' (ibid. p. 195).

6.8 Case Studies: Some Year 8 Readers and Writers

Scope and Aims of the Investigation

I have already discussed in the previous paragraph the reasons for making case studies of individual students. The aims of the investigation are still those listed on page 277. The limitations of the investigation were those of time for interviews and analysis. I had to fit both into a working teacher's life. For this reason I only interviewed one group of students from Year 8 and none from Year 9.

Description of Procedures

I selected six students from the Year 8 class which completed the first questionnaire. My criteria for selection were those of 'representative sub-groups' (Bell, 1987, p. 74). I had in mind a series of broad groupings which described students. These were male/female, white/black, top/bottom/middle set, estate/town/village. From the class at hand, I selected six students who, together, reflected all these criteria. These broke down as follows.

Byron	– white boy, middle sets, estate
David	– white, bottom sets, town
Jonathan	– white, top sets, estate
Soraya	– black, top sets, town
Sarah C.	– white, village, (sets unknown)
Sarah H.	– white, top sets, town.

As can be seen from this list, the criteria did not pan out perfectly. Where I could not find three factors I chose one; thus Sarah C. was chosen because she lived in a village and Sarah H. because she lived in a town.

I used reading diaries and taped interviews for these case studies. Reading diaries would, I thought, give me more detailed individual pictures of literacy. I used students' questionnaires as the basis of the taped interviews. I read their answers again and wrote notes as to what further information I might try to gain. I did not therefore prepare new interview questions or schedules as Bell suggested

(1987). Having taped the interviews I listened to them and wrote up descriptions of the interviews. The interviews were, in Bell's terms, relatively informal but guided.

Bell is concerned on page 73 about the possible bias built into interviews. She writes; 'complete objectivity is the aim'. I would like to state now that, as I have already argued, objectivity is not a factor in ethnographic research (Chapter Five). I was looking for the situated perspectives of students which are relative not objective. I further had to take into account that I was a teacher, even if a teacher-researcher. There are precedents for teacher-student interactions some of which are interrogations. It is impossible then to be objective.

I gathered the 6 interviewees together first in my empty tutor room one morning. I explained my research and told them that the information would be confidential. I asked them to clear their participation with their parents. I gave each a small notebook from school stock and asked them to keep a reading and writing diary for a week. I also explained that I would like to interview them about their questionnaires and tape the interviews but that only I would listen to them. The students listened quietly, were willing and there was no parental concern at any stage.

The interviews took place in school in an empty classroom either during tutor period or at lunchtime. We were not disturbed at anytime. When students returned their reading diaries to me, I found that some had continued them for more than a week.

Analysis of the Reading Diaries

1. Byron

Byron wrote a simple diary for one week in sentences: 'I wrote a diary. I read my fishing mags "Catch"'. Byron's diary contained 18 items, 15 read and 3 written. Of the items read, 3 were at school and 12 at home. The latter consisted of newspapers, magazines, comics and computer games (Table 6.84). The 3 written items were all school work: 'diary', 'story' and 'homework'.

2. Jonathan

Jonathan recorded a month's reading and writing in lists, not sentences: 'French vocab book, RE, Athletics Weekly mag, subtitles on TV, crisp packet'. His extensive list included 135 items. I was able to divide these into reading (87 items), writing (2 items) and, where there was doubt, reading/writing (46 items). All the items in this last category were school work. Jonathan's reading could be divided into 3 sites, school (9 items), home (65 items) and a trip he had made while keeping the diary and where he had needed to read signs and menus (13 items) (Table 6.85).

3. Sarah C.

Sarah C. wrote a 10 day diary in sentences and included comments which made what she wrote a personal diary: 'Today in English we had a spelling test and I got 6 out of 10 which was not very good. French was funny like it always is and maths was boring'. Because of this, her account digressed from reading and writing to other events. There were 5 mentions of reading and 9 of writing. All the writing items concerned school. 1 of the reading items was at school ('diaries') and 3 were at home, 1 book read in the car on the way to the City Centre and 2 mentions of reading the newspaper (Table 6.86).

4. Sarah H.

Sarah H. wrote a 2 week diary listing phrases in an abbreviated style: 'Did my family tree. Copyed [sic] a French family tree'. She put 'read' or 'wrote' for every item. At school, she wrote 58 items, including the diary, and read 41. At home and outside school, she wrote 4 items, including the diary and a nursing exam. and read 4.

5. Soraya

Soraya wrote a diary for 1 week and wrote non-subject specific activities in sentences: 'I read a letter about headlice.' but listed school subjects as categories without specifying reading or writing and also commented on them:

'French=Nothing'. Soraya read 26 items and wrote 12 at school. She read 13 items at home and wrote 20. However 17 of the latter were school-related: 'homework', 'this diary', 'homework diary'. Only 3 items related to home, all birthday cards.

6. David

David did not hand in his diary.

Comparison of the Reading Diaries

To give a flavour of the diaries I have analysed 3 diaries separately (Tables 6.84–6.86). In order to make comparison possible, I have extracted and tabulated the reading and writing for 1 week only from each of the 5 diaries handed in. As students began on different days, I have taken 7 days from each and always included a weekend (Table 6.87). My results are further summarised in Table 6.88.

From these two tables, the following can be noted:

1. Girls' accounts show them doing the vast majority of reading and writing at and for school. Boys appear to do hardly any.
2. Boys' accounts emphasise the private reading they do at home.
3. Boys' and girls' reading at home has only three genres in common but is roughly equal in the range available to each sex.
4. Apart from homework, both girls and boys appear to do very little writing at home.

I refer the reader again to the competences from the reading diaries displayed in the tables in Appendix L.

The reading diaries indicate that there is a range of self-sustaining literate purposes and practices outside school which could feed into the curriculum; but these are, with one exception, reading competences. There may then be a mismatch between what the school sees students doing and what they can do. Equally, the

school may overestimate students' abilities to write in some non-school specific modes. Other non-school specific modes appear in subversive discourses. Students' literacy is 'good for' getting by in school but it is also good for leisure reading, including the support of hobbies, consuming, understanding machines, getting around in the outside world, board and computer games, using money and buying things on holiday, using the media, everyday communication, outside exams and reading books and newspapers.

Case Studies of the Six Students

Case Study One: Byron

This case study of Byron is based on a taped interview with additional information from his reading diary and his questionnaire.

Introduction

Byron was initially chosen as a white boy who was generally in middle sets and who lived on an estate. In his questionnaire, he wrote that he lived in Stacey Bushes and had lived in Milton Keynes for ten years. He said that he had learned to read and write at school, thought he was average at it and did not want to be any better. He thought reading and writing at school would help him to pass exams and, outside school, to read notices. He thought that reading and writing were no different at MK School than at middle school. He claimed not to read what other pupils wrote. His family got the 'Sun' and the 'News of the World'. He himself read the 'Sun', 'Tiger', 'Roy of the Rovers' and fishing magazines. He bought some of these himself. He claimed that there were no books at home. His favourite books were fishing books, there were none almost as good and he liked them because 'its my hobbie [sic]'. He wrote that there was nothing that was too difficult to read at the moment that he'd like to read one day. He did not belong to a library. He bought 'books', by which he clearly meant magazines or part-works, every week from Spar, where he also bought comics. 'Books' were also bought for

him. He read things not connected with school every week. He did not like listening to the radio, but he liked 'listening to' the television. His hobbies were fishing, football and bike riding. He had a computer at home. On TV he liked the Olympics and 'Neighbours'. He did not like music and did not go to the cinema very often. The last film he had seen, and his favourite film, was 'Police Academy IV'. He watched videos: the ones he liked were 'violence' and his favourite was 'Over the Top'. He did not like labels and badges on his clothing. He thought he would use reading and writing when he left school 'for a job'. People should write 'to help them find a job'. He would still learn if he had the choice. Everyone should be able to read and write and if the whole world could read and write 'no-one would be unemplode [sic]'.

Byron's Interview

I have divided my account of Byron's interview into subheadings. For this reason, I have altered the chronological order of replies so that information can be gathered under these headings.

1. Family and Environment

In the interview, Byron's replies were very terse:

NH: 'What do … your parents do?'
Byron: 'Um … work in an office. Nights. Tesco's.'

He said of his estate: 'It's just boring cos' there's nothing to do.' His parents had lived in London, he thought, then they moved to Bury St Edmunds, where he was born, and then to Milton Keynes. His parents both worked in the office at Tesco's. Byron's background is therefore disjunctive. He was not sure where his parents originated from, nor, in his questionnaire could he say where his grandparents carne from. He was, it seemed, unimpressed by his new estate.

2. Educational History and Literacy

Byron went to first school at Greenleys in Milton Keynes. He didn't remember either learning to read and write or whether he could read and write before he went there. He remembered nothing about being taught to read and write at home. Asked how he was taught to read and write at school he answered about Maths.

Byron: 'Fletcher books and we had … we didn't have exercise books and we had Fletcher books. '

3. Literacy at MK School

He was equally terse about reading and writing now he was at secondary school. He was 'average' at reading and writing. When I asked if he had found it difficult to read and write something at MK School he did not reply at all. When prompted, he said that he could manage and had not found anything particularly difficult.

When I asked about reading what other pupils wrote, Things like graffiti, rough books or their work, Byron simply replied; 'No'.

4. Transition Issues

I prompted Byron again on differences between middle and secondary schools. He replied in terms of subjects he had already done: 'History, we did all that. Geography'. The only differences he pointed out were new subjects. The only subject he didn't like was French because :'… I'm not very good at remembering the words and that'.

5. Literacy at Home

I am aware in retrospect of my own bias in keeping on with my inquiry about books. I next probed more about reading books and Byron remembered that he had read books in 'the old school'. He liked 'adventure books' but he did not read

them at home. He did not belong to a library. A book he remembered at middle school was 'Video Theft' which was 'all right'. He said he was not interested in reading stories or anything similar.

In the newspapers his family got, Byron read the sports pages and the cartoons. He was particularly interested in the football. It was the subject of fishing that brought more information from Byron. Whereas his father used to pay for his 'Tiger' comic, he went out and bought his fishing magazines himself because he was interested. We established that when he said 'books' he meant magazines. The confusion had arisen because he also said that there were no books at home and that none were bought to help him at school. His fishing 'books' helped him with his hobby: '... techniques and that. Different techniques and that. About fish and different conditions and that'.

In answer to my request for more details about how he used the magazines – did he learn how to do fishing from them or read other things in them – he replied: 'No, I just read the bits I like reading'. So I inquired whether he read anything other than information about techniques, Byron replied: 'Other bits like things on roach poles and that'. He explained to me what a roach pole was, but said he had known all that before reading it in the magazine.

Byron's reading diary confirms that his reading at home consisted of these fishing magazines, which he read on three occasions in the week when he wrote the diary. He also read newspapers (5 occasions), football magazines (1 occasion), a comic (1 occasion) and used his computer, which I omitted to ask him about. During the interview, he also said that liked labels on jeans and shirts; he read some of them depending on what they were but there were no particular ones he looked for.

6. Mass Media

On television, Byron watched the Olympics, 'Neighbours', 'Eastenders' and 'Grange Hill'. He did his homework when he got home; he had his own room but he read his fishing magazines downstairs with other people around and the televi-

sion on. He did not like music much at all. He went to the cinema if there was anything on he wanted to see. He liked what he called 'violent' videos because 'dunno, I just do'. He liked '15's'. His dad got them from the video shop for him but he could not be specific how often.

NH … so how many videos do you watch a week, say?
B Depends when me dad's got 'em.
NH Or a month?
B (silence)
NH Roughly how many?
B … Dunno. Depends.

He agreed that he watched both '15s' and '18s' but also 'PGs', 'all the Police Academies'.

7. Literate Horizons

Byron thought that reading and writing at secondary school would help him pass exams and also get a job when he left school. He had no idea what sort of job he wanted. In life outside school, he said he thought reading and writing would help him to read noticeboards where you would 'find out what's going on'. My question about what he would like to read that he hadn't read yet was greeted only with silence. At this point we got back to the 'fishing books' which, he explained, were called 'Catch', a part-work set of 32 magazines, which he had now collected in its entirety. He read some several times and some once, it depended on what kind of fishing they were about, coarse or sea. It was the ones on coarse fishing he read. His dad had paid for the folders to keep the magazines in.

My final questions concerned the last part of the questionnaire, Byron's general views about literacy. When he left school, he thought literacy would help: 'like going to the job centre or something and reading the advertising or something'. At home he could see himself reading newspapers and possibly books:

B It all depends on what sort of books they are.

NH Is there any sort you'd quite fancy reading?

B (silence)

Reading and writing, if universal, would, Byron said, help people pass exams and then get jobs and there would be no unemployment.

Byron: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

My interpretation of this interview is that Byron was resisting, to an extent, both myself and the interview situation as part of the necessary evil of schooled literacy. I think that because of my own background and job, but also because of what I represented to Byron, that I seemed to him part of that bookish establishment which tests and interrogates and uses the book as part of such techniques. Byron is someone who, in terms of his own tastes and choices, has rejected the book *in toto*.

Many of Byron's answers were, in their terse, monosyllabic, 'restricted code', blocking devices. My analytical questions about what he did and how often and my constant harping on books brought forth answers couched in terms of tastes ('... I just read the bits I like reading') or elicited vagueness ('Dunno. Depends') or simply silence.

2. School and home

My questions were thus given a 'schooled' slant by Byron. In his answers to what he thought to be my agenda, he did not connect his repeated and obviously pleasurably absorbed reading of fishing magazines with schooled literacy. His magazines were something in which he had invested time, his own money and his father's money and which connected with his leisure activities, often being of practical use in his hobby. This is where Byron chose to use the literacy he had learned. Yet he resisted any analysis or interrogation of the schooled learning process he

had been through to develop this literacy. He could not remember where or how he had been taught to read and write. He saw the eventual functions of this separate category of school as utilitarian: passing exams, getting jobs and reading notices. He could detect no difference between middle and secondary schools except in the category of subjects and in the techniques required in them ('… remembering the words and that'). His suspicion of schooled literacy meant that he was content to remain average in his own terms and did not want to be any better. A hypothesis would be that Byron interpreted questions about his skill in literacy as questions designed to make him categorise himself in schooled terms. His reply of 'average' corresponds then also with the fact that he was in middle sets. His estimation and the school's were one. Byron had no horizons for literacy that he was prepared to admit to.

In Byron's literate culture, in a bookless home, the word 'book' has been appropriated to mean magazines. His home literate experience consisted of these frequently read magazines, tabloid newspapers (sport and cartoons), of male slanted comics and of his computer. The magazines were not read in privacy but socially with other people about and the TV on, a contrast to the idea of private book reading as a leisure pursuit. School was in another compartment where he would need to read 'a recipe for cooking', 'a paragraph out of a French book' or to write a story in English to be completed at home. School was where books and stories predominated. Stories in books (not comics) had no part in his life: he used to read adventure stories at middle school, he used to belong to a library but he could not see himself reading a book when he left school ('It all depends what sort of books they are'.)

He clearly never visited bookshops and relied on his local general store for reading material. In his experience of other media he totally, and unusually, rejected music, but he had fairly wide experience of television, film and video, including adult material in the latter.

3. Gender

A further hypothesis about Byron would be that he had developed a firmly 'masculine' approach to literacy: the excision of books and stories, the emphasis on the active and the practical, the utilitarian view of education, the sport-based reading, the marginalisation of those who attempted to categorise him and the taboo-breaking of watching 'violent' videos. Violent videos especially might be seen as a form of masculine self-testing and Byron's viewing of them might indicate that, although he was using a modern medium, video, he had not espoused any new forms of masculinity offered by the city.

4. Newness

It was not possible, from Byron's evidence, to identify particular new forms of literacy offered by the city. What seemed to me to be new however was the *range* of different literate routes available to Byron, part-works, which he used in tandem with his active practical pursuits, magazines, comics, computers, and the visual media. One of the few routes to which Byron seemed not to be committed was schooled literacy.

Case Study Two: David

Introduction

David did not hand in his reading diary, therefore this case study is based on his questionnaire and his interview.

David was chosen as a white boy from bottom sets who lived in Wolverton. It could therefore be expected that he would reveal something about how it feels to be judged as having a low standard of schooled literacy. The other interesting aspect of David's situation for me was to see how he featured in the context of Wolverton, the old railway town with a tradition of working-class self-improvement and a long historical relationship with a school which was seen as a route to hard-earned success.

In his questionnaire, David wrote that he had lived in Wolverton for 4–5 years.

He did not know where his parents or grandparents were born. He had learned to read and write in school and thought he was 'pretty good'. We note here the contrast with the school's assessment of David as reflected in the sets in which he was placed. He wrote that he would like to be 'just a bit' better at reading and writing. He thought that his new school would help his reading and writing 'by neatness and punctuation'. Outside school, his literacy helped him to read letters and books. He thought that reading and writing in his new school were just the same as at middle school. He said he did not read what other pupils wrote.

David's family got the local free papers and the 'Daily Telegraph'. He himself read the free papers, the 'Beano' and different magazines, some of which he bought himself. His family had a lot of books at home; they sometimes bought him books to help at school. His favourite book was 'Handles' with a few others 'getting close'. He liked these books because they were 'exsiting [sic] and true'. He did not know what he'd like to read that he hadn't yet because 'I've got most good book[s] that I've read'. There was nothing too difficult to read that he'd like to read one day.

He used two libraries, Wolverton and the city centre. He went once a week, looked for 'any' books and got six out at a time. He bought books every month at bookshops and he also bought comics and magazines from the corner shop. Other people also bought books for him. He read a lot of things not connected with school. He also liked pop music, breeding small animals and had a computer. He wrote that 'learning programmes' on television were interesting. He went to the cinema every month. The last time he had seen was 'Crocodile Dundee 2' and his favourite film was 'Inner Space'. He liked to watch all sorts of videos, 'murder, comedy etc.' though he had no favourite. He did not like to have labels and badges on his clothes.

When he left school, David wanted to use his reading and writing to be a 'draftsman [sic] (designing)'. He thought people should learn to read and write 'to help you work when you leave school'. If he had the choice, 'of course' he would learn, and he thought everybody should be able to, although he did not know

what would happen if the whole world could read and write.

David's Interview

I. Family

In his interview, David showed he did know where his parents and grandparents came from, London. His father was a draughtsman – his own ambition we note – and his mother was a secretary.

2. Educational History and Literacy

David demonstrated a keen interest in reading and writing already evident from his questionnaire. He said he had kept 'a lot of books from … my very first school. All my reading abilities'. His mother had spent a lot of time with him helping him to read. He had jumbled memories of his reading at first school; he mentioned 'books A', 'story books' and 'large words'.

3. Literacy at MK School

David confirmed that he judged his reading and writing ability to be 'pretty good now' and that he found reading and writing 'quite easy' in his new school. There was nothing he found too difficult. He saw the ways of improving his reading and writing as: '… more sort of reading all the books at school. I do quite a lot of reading at home so that does help me a lot'. He denied reading graffiti:

NH 'OK. do you read what other people have written round the place like graffiti and things like that?'
D. 'No. Not not much. no.'
NH 'You don't'. (changes subject)

4. Transition Issues

David contradicted his questionnaire when he said that his new school was different from middle school. He expressed this in positive terms: 'Do a lot more

here. Pleased with that'. He was pleased because he liked reading. At middle school, the teacher had listened to pupils read 'each paragraph', which David clearly found boring.

5. Literacy at Home

At home, David read 'true story books' and books about animals. Reading and writing at MK School would help him get a job and outside school '... it helps me to clubs and that. I can fill in all things to join clubs'. The clubs David meant were the ones in comics and magazines where there was an interview, a page about a reader and competitions. He enjoyed sending for posters from these clubs.

In the newspapers he read, David said he liked the 'local ads' and the free booklets and magazines in the Daily Telegraph. He looked at these to find out 'all the new things what're coming, the new inventions and everything and ... I like reading facts'. He also read his 'stars'.

At home, his family had mostly horror and science fiction books: '... all sorts really. Large assortment' David and his brother and father probably read the most and his mother did not read a lot. 'Handles' was still his favourite book. David briefly summarised the plot and said it was good because it was a true story. When I asked him if there were any books too difficult to read at the moment that he would like to be able to read, he focused not on the content but on the technical features of the books he had in mind:

'Er ... I don't like the really really small prints. I can't ... I don't like them because they're usually ... er ... big and they take too long to read and usually you get a bit bored with them'.

When I asked him for examples of particular books of this kind he found trouble in answering:

'I think I've read it now but there was one called 'Wednesday's ...' something I'm

not sure, I forget what it was now ... I read that ... I thought that was pretty good. Found that good'.

When I asked about going to libraries, David said he got 'small books' out and 'facts' but he also read 'a main story book every night'. He said he read both when there were people around and on his own. He said he bought books a lot in sales and from bookshops. The only indication he could give of the kinds of books he looked for were things that were 'new coming in and ... have got facts again'. I pursued this point about facts and he elaborated, saying he looked for books about animals and hobbies. Breeding small animals was one of his hobbies and books helped him to find easier ways to breed animals. He also said that he read the 'Beano' and the 'Dandy'.

I then asked about other hobbies. David said he liked making models and Scalectrix. I asked if he needed to read or write anything for these hobbies. This started him on an explanation of some personal and quite technical uses of literacy. He said that sometimes he took notes of the trains and wagons in his train set and of the weights they could carry just for his own purposes. He said that he also liked electronics and had a computer. He stored the information about his trains on the computer and kept it on tape. He said he now had two full tapes, which included information from electronics. in which he made mini-radiators for example.

6. Mass Media

On television he liked black and white films on BBC2 and wildlife programmes, he liked the film 'Inner Space' and wanted to see 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit'.

7. Literate Horizons

I then asked David about the final section of the questionnaire. I asked how reading and writing might have help him when left school. He answered immediately that it would help him in a lot of ways. He would have to get a job and fill in information on forms. I asked if David could see himself continuing to read out-

side his job, he said he would continue with his computer and with his information and story books. He said that reading and writing helped people in their education and to get a job. He would have chosen to read and write if given the choice. He thought everyone should at least be given the chance to read and to write.

David: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

David, who was so eager and confident in his literacy, was and continued to be in bottom sets in MK School. He was a cooperative interviewee and I detected that he had a pride in himself, his background and the solidity of his personalised uses of literacy. He had made literacy his own, used it fully for his own purposes and developed it in private ways. He reacted with some nervousness to me as teacher/interviewer but he said a lot about himself and his interests and he did not have Byron's oppositional attitude.

2. School and Home

David did not reveal any resentment about his position in sets. He still had confidence in his literacy, especially the reading and writing he used at home, and he had proudly kept his first school books which showed his progress in schooled literacy. His parents were in middle-class jobs and it might be expected that, having lived for four or five years in Wolverton, itself now a multicultural and mixed-class area of a new town, and having given David a sound basis of literacy, they would foresee David having a route to schooled success. David seemed firmly oriented towards getting a job at the end of his schooling. In this way, David and his parents may have been continuing patterns current in Wolverton before the new town was built, that is, they were expecting the school to be a ladder through academic success to the self-betterment they had begun at home.

David assessed his own literacy as good. He had been helped a lot at home, his parents had bought him books to help at school, and he did not see a large necessity for improvement, except in the technicalities of handwriting and presentation.

He did not find MK school a lot different from middle school, but he was pleased to be able to do more and obviously respected school as a site for new opportunities despite its assessment of him.

David's home literacy was very varied: newspapers, magazines, comics, writing to clubs, all the books already at home, the ones bought for him, and his library books which gave him the twin routes of stories and 'facts' for his hobbies. His visits to the library were very frequent and he also went monthly to bookshops, looking for new books, and to book sales. Nevertheless, he had little idea of any areas of discourse he might find exciting and progress to, although he had clearly seen books which had smaller print and for the moment looked insuperable, too long and boring. When David left school, he expected still to be reading fact and story books and using his computer. At school, he simply saw himself 'reading all the books'. He had some command of other areas of discourse, pop music, model making, film and video, and of technical literacies such as electronics and computing. I was very interested in how he gave himself projects, for example seeing how much weight his trains could bear, and how he stored information from his interests on his computer. He had made computer literacy his own, it was personalised, customised and private, like some of his other reading.

The general view of literacy David expressed in the interview was a schooled and a utilitarian view although his own account of his activities showed that his actual practice was different. He saw literacy eventually as helping people get jobs. He therefore could not say what would happen if the whole world could read and write. Like Byron, David defined my agenda mainly as an interest in schooled literacy but he still talked to me with enthusiasm about his home literacy. Unlike Byron, David was pleased that he had been well prepared for school and saw that his home literacy could be extended there.

How then could the school judge David and set him so low? I suspect that initially this was based on his handwriting and on his middle school report. Yet David was proud of and confident in his achievements. It would seem likely then that he was judged on the very technical aspects of literate practice, neatness and punctuation,

that he was hoping to improve.

3. Gender

David did not have Byron's defensiveness about literacy, especially books. He was an avid reader of fiction and non-fiction books, newspapers, comics and magazines. The 'masculine' literate orientations he had were towards the factual, technical and scientific: David was interested in electronics, models, computers and breeding small animals, he liked 'true' story books and he wanted to be a draughtsman like his father. Unlike Byron, David's 'masculine' interests seemed to me to be positive and creative springboard for further literate learning.

4. Newness

David seemed to handle with ease all the media available to him, except, in his teachers' view, schooled literacy. David himself made things new by adapting some of the literacies offered by the new town to his own purposes. I had expected David's other literate activities to reflect his low position in school and I was surprised by the variety of his competences and by his self-confidence in literacy. I surmise then that the support of David's family and this confidence would carry him through school and into the world of work with his varied competences still growing.

Case Study Three: Jonathan

Introduction

This case study is based on Jonathan's questionnaire, reading diary and interview.

Jonathan was chosen as a white boy who lived on an estate and who was in top sets. I also knew that his father was a middle school teacher because he had taught my daughters. A factor in Jonathan's literacy then was, I anticipated, the 'insider' status that his knowledge of schooled literacy derived from his home would give him. As it was, Jonathan's interview was more significant for what he did not reveal than for what he did.

Jonathan wrote in his questionnaire that he had lived at Great Holm for 11–12 years. He said he did not know where his parents or grandparents were born. He learned to read and write 'at school with teacher'. He assessed his own reading and writing as quite good. He would like to 'improve' as much as possible. He thought reading and writing would help him 'quite a bit with homework' in his new school. Outside school, literacy helped him with 'homework and reading'. He thought reading and writing were no different at his new school. He said that he read other pupils' work on the walls'. His family got the 'Milton Keynes Mirror', 'Herald' and 'Citizen' (all local free papers) and the 'Times Educational Supplement' but Jonathan said that he read no newspapers at all. He did not buy any because they were a waste of money. His family had books at home and had bought him books to help at school.

His favourite book was what he called 'C.S.Lewis Tales' and another almost as good was 'The Silver Citadel'. He liked them because they were 'well thought-up and well-written'. But he put a dash against the questions asking if there was anything he would like to read that he hadn't yet and anything too difficult now that he would like to read one day.

Jonathan did belong to a library. He went once a month and looked for science fiction. He got six books out at a time. He did 'not really' ever buy books and he did not know how often he bought them when he did. He bought books at W.H. Smith, Fagins or Cranfield (City Centre bookshops). He got no comics or magazines. Other people did buy Jonathan books and he read things not connected with school 'quite often'. He said that he liked listening to Chiltern Hot FM, a pop music station, on the radio. His hobby was athletics. He did not have a computer at home. On television, he liked to watch murder mysteries. His favourite kinds of music were rapping and hip-hop. He did not know how often he went to the cinema. The last film he had seen was 'Police Academy 5' and his favourite film was 'Inner Space'. He had no video at home. He did not like to have labels or badges on his clothes.

Jonathan thought reading and writing would help him get a job when he left

school. He thought that people should learn to read and write 'for education'. He said that he would learn to read and write if he had the choice and he thought that everyone else should be able to. The result, when the whole world could read and write, would be a 'very educational world'.

Jonathan's Interview

In his interview, Jonathan was guarded and did not explain a lot. I found this attitude odd for a teacher's child, thinking that we might share a discourse of some kind.

1. Family, Educational History and Literacy

In the interview, Jonathan repeated that he did not know where his parents or grandparents were born and that he had lived in Milton Keynes all his life. I established that both his parents were teachers. His parents however had not, he claimed, taught him very much about reading and writing before he went to infants school. He remembered the 'Jane and Peter' books and the library at Middle School. He did say however that his parents had intervened when his brother Chris (now 14), who, like him, had read a lot when he was 10, had stopped reading at the age of 12. Chris did not begin reading again until he was 13, probably because he had not been able to find anything interesting. Jonathan had lent Chris a book and the family had encouraged Chris to go to the library. The two boys had similar tastes in reading. Jonathan thought that his parents would also encourage him in the same way. He was not conscious of reading less now, but when he thought about the past, he realised that he was reading less. Thus Jonathan was able to realise something significant to him as a result of the interview.

2. Literacy at MK School

Jonathan said he liked reading but he did not get a lot of time any more because of all the homework he had to do. He had enjoyed reading both in previous schools and at home. He said he did read other students' work on the walls.

3. Transition Issues

Jonathan did not think reading and writing were much different at his new school.

4. Literacy at Home

Outside school, Jonathan said he did not know how he used reading and writing. He did not read much of the newspapers at home except the headlines, but he did read a magazine. It was 'Cycling Weekly'. He also sometimes read his brother's 'Athletics Weekly'. This in fact contradicted his assertion in his questionnaire that he read no magazines, newspapers or comics at all. The magazines he now said he read were for enjoyment and were not to help in any activity, he claimed.

At home there was 'quite a good selection of books'. His parents' books were mostly reference and his own were fiction. He was between the ages of eight and ten when he was able to read a lot more than he could now. If he had time, he said he would choose to read more. His favourite books were still by C.S. Lewis because 'it pulls you into the actual story' and you couldn't get out of it, you had to keep on reading. 'The Silver Citadel', by Anthony Horowitz, Jonathan thought, was similar to C.S. Lewis because it was something 'in the past where they thinking about the future', it was 'futuristic'.

I pursued this science fiction connection with Jonathan and asked if he got a lot of SF books out of the library. Again he was vague ('Yeah. Probably'), he liked science fiction for the same reasons as above, but would say no more. Outside school, he said he liked athletics and cycling.

5. Literate Horizons

I asked Jonathan whether being at MK School made him think there were things he could possibly read in the future or whether there were things outside school he could see himself reading. He did not see it in these terms, he replied:

'Don't think so really. Just ... just come. Just going down the library. Get out a book. Read it. Might like the author's work.'

Jonathan saw reading and writing as helping with education, for example spelling. He could not see other ways in which people could use literacy. He did not know if he would read or write in the future outside education or work.

Jonathan: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

It was hard to get Jonathan to open up at all in the interview. The one significant outcome was that he realised, despite his brief answers, that he was reading less than in the past. For him, this was an unexpected result of the interview process.

2. School and Home

Jonathan's reading diary revealed a large number of literate practices which he did not consider in his interview. In activities involving products, games, media, machinery, sport, travel, consumption, eating out and money he used kinds of reading. He did more reading at home than at school but, apparently, no writing for home purposes. Jonathan was successful at school and did a lot of homework. The keynote of our conversation seemed to be the lack of time for private reading he now had because of school obligations. His parents clearly underplayed their own roles as educators, intervening only when their son's reading appeared to be slowing down. Jonathan was, I think, quietly intent on success at school. In his questionnaire, he expressed the ambition to improve 'as much as possible' in reading and writing. He had fairly strong reading interests, particularly in the fantasy/SF genres and his sports interests coexisted with his literate interests but did not dominate them. He liked fiction that gripped him, but he said he could not see any horizons either in or out of school, just continuing visits to the library and the help literacy could give his education.

3. Gender

Jonathan's guardedness matches Byron's in his unwillingness to discuss literacy

and his grudging disclosure of any information, especially about personal reading. In his interview, Jonathan revealed a lot less than in his questionnaire. He revealed only 'masculine' practices, cycling, athletics and science fiction, and then dismissed these. But the gender role he assumed was contradicted by the evidence in his questionnaire and reading diary of his wide reading competences.

4. Newness

Jonathan seemed very much caught up in his school work which took a lot of his time, but he also used his literacy in a wide and diverse assemblage of practices, despite his denials.

Case Study Four: Soraya

Introduction

As there were no black students in her class Soraya was chosen as a mixed race girl who lived in Wolverton and who was in top sets. Evidence is taken from her reading diary, questionnaire and taped interview.

In her questionnaire, Soraya wrote that she had lived in Wolverton for ten years. Her mother was born in Perth and her late father in Rawalpindi. She did not know where her grandparents were born. She learned to read and write at school. She was 'good at reading, average at writing' and did not want to be any better. She thought reading and writing would help her at her new school and thought literacy would help enormously to get her a job, misinterpreting the question 'How does it help you in your life outside school?' She thought that reading at her new school was harder because 'it involves reading longer words' but writing was not hard. She said she read what other pupils wrote on displays.

Soraya's family got the 'Times'. She herself read the 'Beano' and the 'Times' and she bought the comic herself. Her family had books at home and also bought her books to help at school. Her favourite book was 'The Voyage of the Dawntreader'. She said there was another book almost as good but she did not name it. She liked these books because they were 'exciting and interesting'. She

said she would like to read 'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole' in the future, but there was nothing too difficult to read at the moment that she would like to read one day. She belonged to a library and went every Saturday. Here she looked for books depending on how she felt at the time but they were 'usually Judy Blume books'. She got four books out at a time. She did buy books, about two a year, from W.H. Smith. She got comics from the newsagents. In addition, other people also bought her books. She read things not connected with school very often'. She liked listening to the radio, particularly 'Saturday Night Fry' and 'Radioactive'. Her hobbies were reading. listening to music and singing. She did not have a computer at home. On television, Soraya liked Lenny Henry and 'Mork and Mindy'. She liked any music except classical'. She did not go to the cinema often but had recently seen 'Mannequin'. Her favourite films were the 'Carry On' series and she did not watch videos. She liked to have labels and badges on her clothes. Soraya thought that reading and writing would help her get a job when she left school. She thought people should learn to read and write because 'it would help them communicate'. She would choose to learn if given a choice and she thought everyone should be able to. When the whole world could read and write there would not, she wrote. 'be so many lessons in school'.

Soraya's Interview

1. Family

In her interview, Soraya said that her mother worked as a photographer and that her father died five years ago.

2. Educational History and Literacy

She learned to read and write by teaching herself, Soraya said, and then by going to school and learning a bit more. By teaching herself, she meant that she had asked for help from her older sister who had taught her a lot. She had not learned to write much from her sister but had learned to read story books such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' from her.

3. Literacy in MK School and Transition Issues

I asked Soraya if her new school was any different to her previous school in terms of reading and writing. She said that reading was not any different but writing was. You had to explain a lot and say what you felt and she had not had to do that before. This was not just in English but also in other lessons and especially when writing profiles. However she did not find this difficult in any way.

I asked Soraya what she read around the school. She said she read story books from the school library 'about people about my age'. I asked which books she chose from the school library. Soraya said she chose Judy Blume books and books she had read before that she liked. It was easier for her to reread than to know if she would like a new book. Otherwise she just looked at a book to 'see if I like it or not'. I asked what would attract her to a new book. She replied: '... if it was good ... if it was about ... someone about my age ... if it was about ... if they had problems or whatever like, you know, how they felt, that sort of thing, you know ... not things like, don't like mysteries. stuff like that. I like Doctor Who books'. I asked her if 'Wuthering Heights' or 'David Copperfield' were not also about people her age. She said they were about 'things that happened before'. They were 'old books' and she liked to read new books as well. We compared 'David Copperfield' with the new books Soraya liked. She said she liked books she could get into quickly. With 'David Copperfield' you got into it slowly and she skipped pages. She said she had only read a little of 'Wuthering Heights'. Her sister kept recommending books to her but there were so many books at home she wanted to read and the classic books we were discussing were slow to get into. However, what she had read of them so far was good.

4. Literacy at Home

At home, Soraya read the magazine that came with their newspaper and also comics, particularly the 'Beano'. She did not read many girls' story comics. She had books that she had grown out of, like the Paddington Bear books. She also had 'Buddy' and books too old for her younger sister and brother but now too young

for her older sister, Samina, such as 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' and 'Black Beauty'. I asked whether there were adult books she could read. She said that she had to wait until her mother had read them first to see if they were suitable for her. Her mother had 'Lord of the Rings' and 'The Godfather'. Of her mother's books, she said she would like to read 'A Room With A View' because she had heard it was a good book. She had not seen the film.

Soraya said she went to Wolverton library and chose books by author, Judy Blume and Roald Dahl especially. Judy Blume, she said, 'writes what you feel but she doesn't know', she writes, Soraya continued 'what she thinks but it's somehow ... just like what you think as well'. I asked her about hobbies. She said she liked singing, reading and listening to music. There were no other hobbies she had which involved reading.

I asked Soraya when she had started reading books such as 'David Copperfield'. She said about two years ago, when she was about ten. I asked her what she could see herself reading in the future that might be as hard or even harder than the classics she had been reading. She said she would like to read things about what has happened. Soraya got confused at this point because she said she did not 'know many books', but she said she would like to read novels to see if she could understand them and also books she had not thought she would be able to read before.

I asked Soraya how she could see reading and writing helping her further on in her school career. She said she was going to be a nurse. She was not sure if reading and writing would help her out because 'it wouldn't be very good if I like reading and I can't read'. Literacy would then be for herself rather than for the job. She could not see how literacy would help when she became a nurse but she expected that it would and it would be 'useful to have it'. I finally asked Soraya why she thought people should be able to read and write. She thought it might help people depending on what they wanted to do. If people did not read and write, most of the education at school would not be of use because they would not understand. If everybody in the whole world could read and write there would not, Soraya said, be many school lessons.

5. Literate Horizons

Soraya thought she was good at reading but, as for writing, she said it depended what I meant be writing. She thought she was quite good at her writing but her presentation was not very good. She said she liked reading though. I pursued this point and asked Soraya how she judged if she was good at reading. She said that there were hard books that not many people could understand but she could. The same applied to words. Her definition of being good at reading then was what could be understood not just read. I asked Soraya how she would judge if some-one were good at writing. She said she did not really know, but if you could explain something then that was good. If you could explain something but you didn't know what you were writing and if your punctuation and grammar were bad, then that was poor writing. She said she was able to do these things.

I went back to the mention of the 'hard books' Soraya said she had been read-ing, leaving aside the interview order I had imposed by following the questionnaire. I thought that here I had an interviewee who could tell me something about her horizons of literacy not revealed by other interviewees. Soraya initially laughed and asked me what I meant. I asked her what sort of books she could read that others would find difficult. Picking up my term, she said they were not so much difficult, but she found that she was able to read 'David Copperfield' in the full original version while others were reading 'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole'. She could also read 'Wuthering Heights' although she could not understand it very well. She could see that there were other books that other people might read later in their lives, but when they were doing that she would be reading something else.

Soraya: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

Soraya is, in one sense, the epitome of displacement and disjunction: of mixed race, living for ten years in an old railway town that had been part of a new town for twenty years and without a father. On the other hand, she was the most confi-dent of the pupils I interviewed, the most proud of her skills and possible horizons,

her reading diary reveals that as well as the literate skills she displayed in her questionnaire and interview, she could also read Arabic although she did not mention this in the interview and I omitted to take it up.

2. School and Home

Soraya's understanding of the interview, as with the other students, was that she should talk about the technical aspects of schooled literacy. Thus, she mentioned that reading now involved longer words and writing needed good presentation. Nevertheless, Soraya, like David, founded her schooled literacy on a strong basis of literate experience fostered by her family. She was thus enabled to measure her progress in reading by comparing the 'hard' books she read with the ones her schoolmates read. She was also able to say that explanation in writing was as important as spelling and grammar. She thus tempered the technical with other factors from her own strong foundation in literate practices.

Soraya's pride in her advanced reading ability was directed, largely by her sister, into the traditional canon of English classic fiction, Dickens, Emily Brontë and E.M. Forster for example, this was the route for her which demonstrated advanced reading ability. Yet she did not know many books in this area. Her mother controlled her reading of adult texts and Soraya carried on a simultaneous reading of teenage novels, for example by Judy Blume and 'younger' fiction by Roald Dahl, making a distinction between 'old' (the canon) and 'new'. At the same time she read the 'Beano' and the 'Times' and had varied competences in other media.

In terms of the future, Soraya wrote in her questionnaire that literacy would help her to get a job but if she were to become a nurse she did not see how it would help her to actually do the job. Literacy would be something she would retain for her own purposes. She seemed to see literacy as intimately connected with schooling, so that universal literacy would mean less schooling and more communication, although her own multiple skills gave the lie to the simple equation of literacy with schooling. Clearly, school was not encouraging Soraya sufficiently in her view of herself as a skilled reader. As with David, it was home and family

which gave her a way to judge her mastery of texts. School provided no apparent horizons except a job route. Soraya contradicted herself by saying in her questionnaire that she did not want to be any better at reading and writing, presumably in schooled terms, and yet showing how proud she was of her skills in her interview.

3. Gender

Soraya came from a largely feminine environment and a very literate one. She was encouraged at home by her mother and her sister. She seemed to be able to pick and choose among cultural routes on offer. She had followed 'gendered' routes such as Judy Blume books, music and singing but she had refused others such as girls' comics. She had a 'feminine' career, nursing, as her aim and I wonder if her literary skills would be commensurate with this ambition or whether Soraya would find that she was able to do something more.

4. Newness

Soraya was familiar with 'old' and 'new' texts. She read new novels but saw the route of the traditional canon of English 'classics' as an avenue of literate progress. Nevertheless. Soraya's 'newness' is in the *diversity* of her reading and writing. I think it is safe to predict that Soraya's competences would bring her academic success, and that she would eventually become more conscious of the breadth of her literate abilities. I also think that the challenges she gave herself in her private reading would enable he to continue to tackle difficult and diverse texts in later life.

Case Study Five: Sarah C.

Introduction

Sarah's case study is based on her questionnaire, reading diary and interview. Sarah was chosen as a white girl who lived in a village. I did not know which sets she was in at school.

In her questionnaire answers, Sarah wrote that she had lived in the village of

Castlethorpe for 'quite a long time'. She did not know where her parents or grandparents were born. She learned to read and write at school and at home. She thought her reading and writing abilities were 'avridge [sic]'. In answer to the question about how much better she would like to be at reading and writing, Sarah answered 'good at it'. She wrote that reading and writing at school would help her in exams. In life outside school, literacy would help her read 'danger signs'. At her new school. she commented that reading and writing had not changed much from middle school. When asked if she read what other pupils wrote, she replied 'I read them at school' Her family got 'Dog World', the 'Daily Mirror' and the 'News of the World'. Sarah read 'Dog World' and 'Smash Hits'. Her family had books at home at they bought her books to help at school. Her favourite book was what she called 'Doggy Book'. There was not another one almost as good. She liked such books because 'they are interesting and I like dogs'.

Sarah did not know what she would like to read next that she had not yet read. She wrote that 'a book which is about wippets [sic] and the writing is really thick' was something she had seen which was too difficult at the moment but which she would like to read. She did not belong to a library. She did buy books herself, depending on how much money she had. She bought books from W.H. Smith or from dog shows. She also got comics or magazines from W.H. Smith or a paper shop. Her mother, father and grandmother bought her books. She read things not connected with school if she got bored.

She did not like listening to the radio. Her hobby was collecting models of dogs. She did not have a computer at home. She liked 'Neighbours' on television and she liked pop music. Sarah did not go to the cinema often, but the last film she had seen was 'Mannequin' and her favourite film was 'Lassie'. She did not watch videos. She did like labels and badges on her clothes.

When she left school, Sarah though she would use reading and writing 'for jobs and other things'. Other people should read and write, Sarah wrote, 'Because it will help with jobs'. If she had the choice, she would still learn to read and write and if the whole world could read and write it would be 'a better world'.

Sarah C.'s Interview

1. Family and Environment

I began Sarah's interview by trying to probe her view of Castlethorpe, the village where she lived. I hoped to establish any differences village life might create for Sarah as a pupil and as a reader and writer. She told me that she lived in an old house with a railway track at the bottom of the garden. There used to be an old castle there with a moat you could still see bits of. The population was, she said, mostly old people. Sarah's mother was a housewife and her father worked for Westland helicopters in Bletchley. Sarah used to live in Newton Longville (another village in the south of Milton Keynes). However, her parents had not always lived in the area.

2. Educational History and Literacy

Sarah's mother had taught her to read and write as her father was either at work or in bed most of the time. Her mother had taught from a book whose title Sarah could not remember and she had made Sarah learn words.

3. Literacy in MK School

She answered immediately that she was not very good at spelling. This was a problem in some lessons. In school, she struggled with some books; this was a general problem, not confined to a particular subject. She thought reading and writing would help with exams and then a job. She said that she read other pupils' work on the walls at school and took in what it said.

4. Transition Issues

The difference between MK School and Sarah's last school was 'moving around, not staying in one place'. Reading and writing were only a bit different. There were more spelling tests (in English lessons) in this school.

5. Literacy at Home

Sarah said that, at home, she did 'not really' read newspapers but only 'Dog World' and 'Smash Hits'. She liked 'Dog World' because she was 'into dogs'. 'Dog World' was 'interesting' but she did not see her reading of it as having a practical purpose. She was more interested in whippets, she said. With 'Smash Hits' she would read the whole magazine. Sarah's mother also read 'Dog World', for which they had a regular order but sometimes she and sometimes her parents bought 'Smash Hits'. Sarah herself had lots of books on dogs at home as well as books on other animals. She had a few story books, but her sister Emma, aged 14, had more. Sarah did not read many story books she said. She had been bought a book about the Earth by her parents to help her with geography at school. She did not belong to a library although a mobile library came to Castlethorpe. If Sarah had any money of her own, she said she bought books about dogs. She only sometimes read her dog books and she did read the labels and badges she had on her clothes.

6. Literate Horizons

When I asked Sarah if there were anything she would like to read in the future, she said she was not very good at reading 'small writing'. Her ambition was still to read the thick book on whippets she had mentioned in her questionnaire. When Sarah left school, She said reading and writing would help to get a job and in that job, although she had no idea yet what she wanted to do. She was glad that she had learned to read and write because it had helped her in her 'work'.

Sarah C.: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

Sarah was a quiet interviewee, slow to answer and then careful about her answers. She seemed guarded in the same way that Jonathan was, as if the interview were a kind of hard to place school test which required concentration and hard mental work.

2. School and Home

Sarah was not significantly different from the others because of her village background, although I did notice that her literate interests were concentrated on a smaller range of topics. Her mother's interest in dogs had also become Sarah's interest and much of her literate practice was focused on dogs although she claimed there was not a strong connection. Her other main interest was pop music. She read every word of 'Smash Hits'. At school, she had problems with spelling and some reading tasks. She said that she saw exams and a job as the main use for her literacy and the only other 'route' she discussed was further information about dogs, in the form of the difficult book about whippets.

3. Gender

It could be argued that Sarah had concentrated her interests in two 'gendered' directions, animals and pop music. She was strongly influenced by her mother who was a dog lover and who had taught her to read in the frequent absence of her father.

4. Newness

There was no obvious sense of newness in Sarah's account of herself. However, her dog books, her magazines and school seemed to dominate her literate life and it could be argued that a concentration of effort in a few intensely interesting topics provides an example of skilled literate practices within the reader's own purposes.

Study Six: Sarah H.

Introduction

This case study is based on Sarah's questionnaire, reading diary and interview. Sarah was chosen as a white girl from Wolverton who was in top sets. In her questionnaire answers, she wrote that she had lived in Wolverton all her life. In answer to the question about where her parents and grandparents were born, she left a

blank. She learned to read and write 'mostly at school and some at home'. Sarah wrote that she was quite good at reading and writing but would like to be 'a bit better'. She thought that MK School would help her to achieve this so that: 'I will be able to read the work we are given and we then would be able to write the work we are given'. Outside school, Sarah wrote that reading and writing would help 'When I get a job I will be able to read letters that need sending for mistakes when I have written them'. She thought that reading and writing at her new school were not different but they were harder. She sometimes read what other pupils wrote 'if they wish me to. Anywhere'.

Sarah's family got 'Today' and the 'Mail on Sunday': she herself read 'Scoop'. She bought her own magazines and sometimes her own comics. Her family had 'millions' of books at home. Her parents bought her and her brother dictionaries and information books to help them at school. Sarah's favourite books were 'Goodnight Mr Tom' and 'The BFG'. 'What Katy Did' was almost as good. She liked these books because 'They are funny but they also are sirous [sic]'. She did not know what she would like to read that she had not read yet. There was 'not really' anything. Sarah belonged to Wolverton library. She went there when she had finished a book. There, she looked for Marmalade Atkins books. She only got one out at a time because she did not get time to read any more. She bought books, but that was only once a year at W.H. Smith, although other people bought her books for Christmas. She did not know how often she read books or other materials not connected with school.

Sarah listened to the radio in the morning, she liked pop music. Her hobbies were first aid and collecting foreign dolls. She had a computer at home. On television, she liked 'Casualty' and 'Neighbours'. She went to the cinema every one to six months. The last film she had seen was 'Masters of the Universe' and her favourite film was 'Big Foot and the Hendersons'. Although she put a dash after the question 'Do you like videos?', she wrote that she liked 'funny videos'. Sarah did not know what her favourite video was. She wrote that she sometimes liked labels and badges on her clothes.

Sarah's answer to the questions about how she would use reading and writing when she left school was 'a lot'. She thought other people should learn to read and write so that they could get a job. Given the choice, she would learn and she thought that everyone should be able to read and write. If the whole world could read and write then 'They'll all be able to read and write. For magazines and there might be more people in the political world'.

Sarah H.'s Interview

1. Family and Environment

In her interview, Sarah said Wolverton was 'nice'. She had lived there all her life but her parents had originally come from London, where they had lived for a year before coming to Milton Keynes.

2. Educational History and Literacy

Sarah learned to read and write mostly at school but at home her mother had taught her how to write and spell her name. When she first went to school, she said she learned to write sentences. From her first school reading books, she remembered 'Roger Redhat', which was a good story.

3. Literacy in MK School

Sarah liked her new school. It was, in her words, 'more adultly'. Part of the difference was moving around to lessons. At this school, Sarah said she thought she was quite good at writing but did not like reading much, although it depended on the book. A good book she read a couple of times but anything that did not interest her she did not read. There was nothing she could think of that she found too difficult to read or write at her new school. Another difference from middle school was that at this school she was now being asked to answer questions on what she had read. Sarah said she read other pupils' stories when asked to by the teacher or by other pupils.

4. Literacy at Home

At home, Sarah said she read the sports sections in newspapers and also bits about children and 'things that happen in the world'. There were a lot of books at home, including dictionaries and reference books and Sarah did use them. She bought Roald Dahl books herself and people bought her 'literature' books for Christmas, with parts of stories such as 'Mutiny on the Bounty' in. She did use the computer at home and found it easy. She played her father's games on it.

D. Literate Horizons

When she left school, Sarah said she would use her reading and writing skills in leisure time as well as in work. Reading and writing would, she said, help with a job. Outside school she had four pen-pals and thus she could see herself continuing to read and write letters.

Sarah H.: A Summary

1. Success of the Interview Format

In her interview, Sarah answered brightly and with humour, as if the interview were some kind of interesting game between us which also confirmed the more adult role she had assumed on becoming a secondary school pupil. She was a positive interviewee with firm opinions.

2. School and Home

Sarah's background in Wolverton seemed to have little significance but her particular household was full of books, which she was encouraged to read. Unlike Sarah C., her reading was very diverse. She did a variety of things, including first aid, and reading was one of them. She liked 'classic' children's books. Her ideas of her future uses of literacy were, however, vague and utilitarian. For someone in top sets and with a literate background, she was finding some things at the school boring, for example some of the reading tasks set. This could imply that her competences

were not being sufficiently developed at MK School.

3 Gender

Sarah's questionnaire and interview show some gendered routes in her activities. She read 'girls' books such as the Marmalade Atkins books and her hobbies included doll collecting and first aid. On the other hand, the variety of things she was able to tackle included 'Mutiny on the Bounty' and computer games.

4. Newness

Sarah was the only one of the three girl interviewees who had access to a computer at home and who told me that she actively played games on it, apart from this, she had a formidable range of reading and writing skills encouraged by a supportive family. I am thus able to speculate that she would achieve academic success at MK School and continue to develop her competences outside school.

6.9. Conclusions

The case studies give a complex picture of young literacy learners in Milton Keynes. From this complexity I think it is possible to extract some general features.

Apart from Byron, the other five interviewees had all been given support and encouragement at home to be skilled and independent readers. Byron also had become a reader skilled enough to match his own purposes, learning from his fishing magazines. All six students read a variety of materials and watched or listened to a variety of media. We could therefore generalise first that home and family are a key element in establishing an orientation to independent uses of literacy necessary for the purposes the students defined themselves and, secondly, that home and family give young people confidence about their own skills even if this is not reflected in the school's assessment of them. We might speculate that the home continues to be the place where, in many cases. young people in Milton Keynes 'learn their letters', both as a preparation for school and as an alternative to school, continuing the tradition of a popular literacy outside schools.

The interviewees seemed to accept a mismatch between their own and the school's estimation of their literate competences and were not openly resentful, with the possible exception of Byron. The confidence that David and Soraya showed in their independent uses of literacy was not apparently affected by either their placing in school or the fact that school did not, in their minds, use or credit these competences. The pupils either felt, like Soraya, that she would succeed at school as a by-product of her activities outside or, like David, made a mental split between what he could do and the way school categorised him. According to the students, MK School was judging them largely on the technical aspects of their *writing* while they were in fact skilled *readers* who did not do much writing outside school.

In terms of the variety of literacies they had mastered, gender seemed to play a large part in their orientation to certain cultural areas, such as sport for the boys and first aid or nursing for the girls. In different ways, all the boys had crises in their progress with literacies. Byron could see no horizons in school at all. Jonathan realised during the interview that he had not read as much as he wanted to outside school and even then might need help and direction from his parents. David was not doing well at school, despite his competences outside. I knew this because I taught him. Of the girls, Sarah C. had a narrow but intense focus for the major uses of her literacy and was finding school work difficult. Like Byron, she seemed to be content within the concentrated focuses of her uses of literacy outside school. Soraya and Sarah H. were wide and successful readers both in and outside school. Gender is, it seems, a factor which interacts with family background and the resulting attitudes to school to determine literate horizons both in and outside school.

In their own minds at least, these young people in a new town couched their literate horizons either in schooled terms, getting a job, reading the classics, or transgressively, as exemplified by Byron's interest in adult videos. This means that they were unable to articulate to me their own personal purposes; they seemed to acknowledge only purposes determined by others, at least in the interview situation.

This brings me to the limitations of the interview technique in finding out the

range of students' competences. The interview method was both successful and unsuccessful as a source of accurate information. Its success or failure appeared to depend on the mental set of the interviewee. I detected four kinds of mental set among the six interviewees. These were:

1. Blocking: resistance to the interview because it seemed like another manifestation of interrogations about books common in the classroom. Boy students in particular appear to use blocking aggressively as a 'masculine' response both to questioning by a teacher and to questioning about literacy. There may be a connection with the fear of failure.
2. Formality: guardedness about what answers revealed, as if the questions were either intrusive or a kind of test.
3. Openness: a chance to discuss and reveal what school does not enquire about, despite some nervousness because the questions were still being put by a teacher.
4. A Game: the interview as a kind of enjoyable game to which personal information was a welcome and unexpected contribution.

Because of these four approaches, it was attitudes as well as information which became evidence for me as an researcher. The interview process did seem to make students consider literacy as something to be thought about, involving questions which they may not have put to themselves before I asked them. Before the interviews, literacy had not perhaps seemed privileged as a 'subject' to the students but had remained something embedded in their everyday cultures. They had previously been unable to abstract reading and writing as a topic for consideration but had simply grouped all school work into subjects. Some of the students realised they had come to an impasse where, they said, they had found no new routes to follow. Some were prompted by having to think about reading and writing to grasp for the names of the books they had enjoyed at previous schools. Two students, having considered their literate practices, were able to express pride in their competences. The boys in particular displayed what could be called gendered attitudes

to teachers and to interviews, or interrogations as they may have seen them, with their deliberately monosyllabic replies. Sarah C. was also monosyllabic, though not aggressive. She was anxious and guarded towards a male interviewer.

The combination then of attitude and information, shows us that there seems to be a mental disjunction between school and the outside. School was compartmentalised. Although schooled literacy competences could be transferred from previous schools and there was apparently not a lot of difficulty in tackling what the new school required, some students were still finding themselves categorised, and categorising themselves, as 'average', 'better' or 'worse' in schooled terms, not necessarily in theirs. They may have seen the interviews as part of this total technical pattern of assessment and myself not as a researcher but as the representative of schooled literacy.

I did not therefore get as much as I had hoped from the interviews, questionnaires and reading diaries, although I got as much as the methodology allowed. The students trusted me enough, considering the circumstances, to give me some information but not necessarily the whole story. In the interviews, I was offering them a different, more dialogic, kind of interaction than in a classroom, but their strategies were indicative of the contradiction between their views of me as a teacher and as something more anomalous. They knew that the interviews, questionnaires and reading diaries were not the end-point of the project, but, with the exception of Sarah H., who discussed the project with me after we had taped the interview, they were not confident to ask about it. The parameters of what we were doing were, to these five, vague. Their uncertainty could be interpreted as part of the lack of continuity in their social awareness in the disjunctive situation of Milton Keynes.

The students may also have anticipated that teachers' expectations are 'always' couched in the technical style and that they would be expected to play the role of pupils. My situation as a teacher-researcher in MK School did not make this any easier because, there, the role of the learner is clearly and formally defined. In retrospect, I am also conscious that there was an orientation to my questions. I was

trying to find linear development in the students' reading and writing towards what *I* might consider to be adventurous or challenging texts, texts which might show the way to personal or political change. Students may have read such books in their English lessons, something likely according to my own knowledge of the English department, but I got no evidence of this. I think I expected to find students who had limited literate experience outside school and who conformed to their placing in the schools; a teacher's unreflexive bias. It took me time and reflection to spot the diversity and intensity of some of their literate competences outside school and their compartmentalisation of schooled literacy.

If I were to do the case studies again, I would focus additionally on English lessons, where, it seems to me, schooled and 'outside' literacies can blur. I did not ask specifically about English lessons and students did not offer information about them in interviews or questionnaires. In their reading diaries, the five students who completed them listed English as simply another subject with attendant tasks, for example Soraya wrote: '… English (x2) = A story'.

There were, then, things that the students were not telling me. I knew that they were 'in the making' as the new readers and writer of Milton Keynes. I did not, however, ask them about their 'possible worlds', the way they might imagine their literate futures or their role models as readers and writers. How could they be expected to meet the demands of schooled literacy and never be asked to imagine worlds in which they might *use* literacies?

Because of the incompleteness of my evidence, it seems that I need to speculate, using my own knowledge of the school and the pupils, about their futures as literates. Where appropriate I have done this in the summaries of the individual case studies. However, I think it is necessary to make the general comment that, in my view, MK School made little or no difference to the literate competences shown by these young people outside school. It may, however, have made a difference in those areas, such as exams, where success in schooled literacy creates success or failure and determines job or higher education prospects. Yet, I believe that such success or failure is predictable from these students' positions in Year 8. Put bluntly,

Soraya, Sarah H. and Jonathan would succeed and the rest would not do well. In this sense, school placing, home background and 'inside knowledge' of schooled literacy are the most powerful predictors of success in MK School.

6.10. General Comment

Home and family were a major factor in determining these students' attitudes to literacy and the purposes, focused or diverse, they had developed. The interviewees were all successful in the wide and narrow purposes they had set themselves but this did not mean that they had wide literate *horizons* or that they were successful at school. They did not seem to have any vested interest in school; it seemed a necessary evil to which they gave over the ability freely to judge their literacy in its own terms. It represented, in some cases, a series of demanding technical constraints. There did not seem to be anything that could be directly categorised which school had done to shape students literate ideals.

However, the 'newness' of these students' literacies was evident in an unexpected way. I did not find evidence of clear progression or clear horizons shaped or offered by the new town environment what I did find was diversity, fragmentation, perhaps even 'choices' within a disjunctive situation. These were students who were largely unclear about their family origins, transported into a new environment. They continued and expanded uses of literacy begun in the family, with its sometimes conventional range of routes and purposes for literacy. In the new town these young people were able to develop *multiple* literacies, even if limited by gender. Books were, outside school, one among many routes. In this disjunctive situation, schooled literacy came to seem an alienated but necessary part of their lives but one to which, among their own multiple competences, they were not committed. Although some students may have kept their thoughts to themselves, or considered the subject irrelevant or hadn't considered their own competences, it seems clear to me that there was vast potential in what they could do, even if most, unlike David, had not made their competences sufficiently their own to see where they might actively lead and enable them to make something new.

6.11. Summary

In my comments on the questionnaires, I suggested that interviews would clarify students' feelings and motives, give finer details about their literacies, create a more dialogic relationship with the interviewer and provide evidence of students' situated perspectives.

I now find that, as I should have expected, information was not direct but mediated by students' mind-sets about school. It was possible, even given this attitude, to achieve a more dialogic relationship by getting students to talk about their personal uses of literacy and to learn some more details about them.

In addition to the information from the questionnaires, I had learned the following additional things:

1. The variety of mind-sets.
2. The areas of talk and silence, for example graffiti and literate horizons elicited little or no response in some cases.
3. The role of gender in mind-sets and routes for literacies.
4. The kinds of literate crises.
5. The strength of some students' pride in their uses of literacy outside school, especially reading competences.
6. The central role of home and family in determining attitudes to literate purposes, attitudes to school and in supplying initial instruction.
7. The satisfaction given by literacy used for personal purposes whatever its limitations from an adult point of view.
8. The mental disjunction between school and home literacies.
9. The wide range of literacies offered by the new town and taken up by pupils without their apparently being able to credit themselves as skilful across such a range or even being able to conceive of their range .
10. The role of the interview in making the interviewees feel that I was still judging them as a teacher.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

My study of social literate practices in Milton Keynes has not indicated clearly identifiable new literacies. Instead, I have found that young people are using a variety of literate practices in a complex historical and cultural situation within which there are tensions and contradictions. Two examples of such tensions and contradictions are, first, the coexistence of the consumer-led culture of the new town and the version of education which teachers, parents, governors and pupils consider 'the best', and, secondly, those pupils' simultaneous espousal of and rebellion against formal models of literacy. Given that the literacy events I have described in Milton Keynes all partake of such tensions and contradictions, I want now to pick out positive aspects of staff's and students' literate practices in order to show what the citizens of Milton Keynes can and will do with their literacies.

I have found that the particular local character of Milton Keynes as a new town is disjunctive. In particular, young people experience a disjunction between their multiple literacies and the reading and writing in lessons, which is seen as separate, utilitarian and not worthy of commitment. Young people in the new town are constructing their roles as readers and writers of texts from disparate elements which include the traditions of the area, their often displaced home backgrounds and the opportunities available in the new town. I have shown that MK School does not appear to be offering student readers and writers zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986) which offer them meanings to act on in order to reach the higher stages of conceptual development. In the new town environment, the justification for certain kinds of mastery, shared purposes, demands for extended learning, the continuities of schooling with schooled literacy as a 'central category' of a commonly accepted view of education (Geertz, 1993a) and an acceptance of politics as part of education have been cut off, for example with the demise of the labour movement exemplified by the Wolverton Works. Without being encouraged to be critically aware by the school, students are learning multiple discourses, some

of which they can operate in and on to make new literacy events, for example David's use of his computer to record weights, some of which have limited scope, such as those students whose newspaper reading consists entirely of free papers, some of which satisfy current but not future needs, such as Byron's concentrated focus on fishing. These discourses are further complicated by issues of power, gender. 'race' and class. Yet a disjunctive situation also has the potential of making available the new, modern, technological and progressive in their pluralities, both in and outside school, and for preferring literacies which are powerful. Material progress, represented by a new town, can offer liberating possibilities, yet many young people who leave schools in Milton Keynes are seen as inadequate in attitude and literate competences for employment as locally available.

Alternative literacies seen in school also show tensions and contradictions. They display competences, uses and purposes not officially approved of by the school but relevant to pupils, their social learning and their rights as individuals. In this sense. alternative literacies are partly political. They enable students to protest and to find a voice. They demonstrate that young people are able to enter cultural codes and use them to their own advantage and in powerful ways. The 'rules' of alternative literacies can be deployed for play or pleasure, unlike the rules of schooled literacy and its attendant moral demands. Alternative literacies can engage the inner world in ways in which some school practices do not, for example, when students try on new identities in their graffiti writing. Alternative literacies allow students to find alternative sites for the making of meanings because their meanings are marginalised by the thrust of the school's dominant models of literate practices, for example, when students use notes in class or graffiti to work on social relationships by fixing up meetings or resolving disputes.

7.2. The Way Forward for MK School

I have located the positive educational literate events in MK School within what I have called the dialogic (p. 263). I suggest that in order to enable pupils to become more powerful users of literacies over a range of texts, MK School would need to

approach the total language experience of its pupils 'ideologically', that is, by espousing and respecting a more inclusive 'counting in' of pupils' purposes, uses of language and language competences, of pupils' situated perspectives, and their cultural continuities and differences. This shift to the dialogic would need to become the officially promoted literate practice of the school. Staff too would need to make public official purposes for the literate practices they were practising and promoting other than examination results or OFSTED inspections. These would be educational, developmental purposes. The implication of a dialogic policy would be that staff would need to reflect, read, discuss, research, face complexities and confront the role models they themselves give as literacy users in school, for example, when a teacher is seen to be reading and writing solely within schooled literate practices or for administration. I think that a vital aspect of my findings has been that fragmented dialogic teaching will not affect the hold of the technical. The whole culture of the school needs to become more reflexive. The best way to achieve this would be through a whole school language policy based on the socio-cultural theory of language. This would be a truly post-modern education.

As literate practices are one facet of cultures, a change in emphasis towards a dialogic policy would also have consequent effects in other areas of the organisation of the school. A dialogic language policy would imply a diminished emphasis on bureaucracy, 'ability', control, surveillance, testing and conformity as morality and more emphasis on negotiation, achievement and potential, learning to be self-motivated, individual targets and ethical debate. There could be implications for pedagogy in the study of a wide variety of texts and knowledge as an incomplete process. There could be implications for narrowly defined roles for the 'pupil' and a shift to a respect for growing identities. There could be implications for the community whose support would be needed from an educational not a public relations point of view. There could be implications for the social welfare of pupils because the problematic and negative preoccupations of alternative literacies, such as sexual stereotyping, would need to be addressed openly as part of a dialogue with students. In this way, language, including literate practices, could be used to identify

and work on cultural codes in order to enable students to make changes. This suggestion may seem in some ways utopian in the mode I critically dealt with in Chapter Three but it builds only on tendencies already present in the school. A shift to the dialogic would also place the school in a tradition of writing and research about language in schools already with a long history in 'creative' English Studies, e.g. in 'NATE.'

7.3. The Observer Observed

In the first chapter of this thesis, I described my own routes to literacy and suggested that a study such as this needs to take into account the point where the situated perspectives of observer and observed intersect. I also mentioned my view of the teacher-researcher as an 'implicated observer'. In this phrase, I tried to encapsulate my experience of the contradictions and compromises of the teacher-researcher's role. As a teacher, he or she has to negotiate a role within a particular school culture which may emphasise more or less restricted definitions of the role of teacher. Teachers in MK School are necessarily also the targets for students' oppositional culture. The teacher-researcher, having taken on the role of theorising his or her role, has to exercise a reflexivity which may involve secrecy, guilt or may make that person seem in some way 'out of place' to students and other staff. There is a tendency to jump in and out of role.

Reflexivity is not an ethnographer's privilege however. It is whatever nags at us beneath the surface of our daily work. The teacher-researcher develops that. Doubt leads to research. Doubt is a sign of those parts of the personality suppressed by certain expectations of the teacher's role. Such contradictions and tensions as I have described cause 'field-work stress' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Because of these contradictions and tensions, the teacher-researcher is, like the students, trying to be heard, to find a voice, to have autonomy, time and space within the demands on a teachers time, trying to be an integrated person. Again the personal becomes the political.

7.4. Coda

I was fortunate enough in 1988 to be offered a new role in MK School as Co-ordinator of Equal Opportunities. By chance, this legitimised the teacher-researcher role because I gave myself the tasks of reading, preparing reports and recommendations and working with others to put them into practice. As a 'dialogic' teacher, previously somewhat at odds with some aspects of the dominant culture of the school, I was able to learn to promote my opinions, find like-minded colleagues, read National Curriculum and County documents to find support for equal opportunities initiatives, frame arguments and present them to different audiences, answer difficult questions and use dialogic and consultative techniques to spread ownership of equal opportunities to staff, students, governors, parents and outside agencies within the particular demands and character of MK School.

In 1992 I gained promotion to another secondary school in Milton Keynes with responsibilities for equal opportunities and middle school liaison. In my years in Milton Keynes I had been fighting the technical and some aspects of newness. I find now that I am more committed to the town. I now have a history here, my family has lived here, my children went to school here.

Yet technical and simplistic mythologies are still dominant in the policies of the government and its advisors. This has affected every school, including my new school which has a more 'dialogic' history. Educational policy makers forget that changes work through schools slowly, year by year. I have seen the school in which I now teach change to a more 'pyramidal' management structure and increase the technical demands on teachers and pupils. Meanwhile, new paradigms of education stemming from America set the next direction for schools, which will be to catch up with developments in information technology and have every classroom 'wired' (Hugill, 24.7.94.). It remains to be seen whether the classroom treatment of data from the information superhighway will be technical or dialogic.

This thesis has taken the time it takes a working teacher to complete. In researching and writing it I have explained to myself what kinds of activities promote children's development as the literacy learners they would like to be and we

would like them to be. It remains for schools, communities and policy makers to be persuaded. I am glad to join the company of those who are trying to achieve this.

Appendix A

RULES FOR STUDY

1. Punctuality: always get to lessons promptly. If you are necessarily late you will have to make up time lost.
2. Wait outside the classroom until told to enter by a teacher.
3. School books: you are responsible for the care and good condition of exercise books text books, files, etc., given to you. If lost or damaged you will have to pay for them. Your subject teacher will tell you if books need to be covered. You need a sturdy, waterproof bag to carry books around in. No exercise books, including rough books, may be defaced.
4. Your own equipment: always bring the correct equipment to lessons: a pen, a pencil and a ruler are essential; also text books, exercise book or file for the appropriate lessons; and your rough books and homework diary.
5. Always keep your MKfax folder with you. You can then keep a record of your work, your achievements, your homework; and you can show it to your parents and ask for their comments.
6. Written work
   1. Start each piece of work with a title and date.
   2. Write in pen, draw in pencil.
   3. Work neatly at all times.
   4. Write in full sentences unless told otherwise.
   5. Underline headings; rule off finished work.
7. Homeworks are vital for progress. When homeworks are set they must be done. They need to be given thought and care: don't rush them, do your best, and get them done on time. If they are not handed in on time, you can expect additional work.
8. Work missed through absence must be copied up.
9. Finally: if you don't understand work, ask your teacher for help. If you want help with study skills, there are staff to advise you: ask a teacher or tutor.

Remember: no one is a success by accident;

no one is a success without hard work.

Follow these rules and you will gain success and enjoyment for your studies.

Appendix B

Draft Marking Policy

This document has been produced by a working party in consultation with the staff of the school. A school marking policy involves all staff in an agreed approach to assessing students written work in all areas of the curriculum. In formulating a marking policy a broad meaning of the word marking must be adopted. Written comments are not the only form of assessment to which students respond.

The marking and ensuing dialogue between teacher and students is an essential part of the teaching/learning process. It avoids confusion in the minds of the students, ensures continuity of approach and provides a model by which students can begin to assess their own written work. This in turn could lead to an improvement in the quality of their work. A Marking Policy devised in this way would have very close links with the Record of Achievement.

It is hoped that the Draft Marking Policy can be used for a trial period starting at the beginning of the September term when the intake year will be working on the theme of The Environment. It is hoped that everyone will give some feedback of their experiences when using the Marking Policy. We would like this feedback by 1st October 1990 – a reminder will be given for this nearer the time. The feedback will then lead to adjustments in the marking policy which can then be redrafted.

Considerations to be made when setting and marking students work.

When marking, please:

1. make the purpose of the writing task clear to the students when asking them to do a piece of work?
2. explain the way in which the written work is to be assessed?
3. choose what your main priorities is/are when assessing the work? Are you assessing:

   Content the quality of what is being said?

is the style appropriate/relevant to the task?

Organisation Sequence of thoughts, sentence structure, syntax?

Handwriting/presentation.

Spelling

Grammar

Punctuation

4. mark to: either acknowledge that you have read the work?

   or as part of a diagnostic process?

5. consider marking : as the students are writing?

   when the work is finished?

   with the student present/absent?

6. help the students to develop their own strategies for improving their own work?

   suggestions Have you read it through?

   Does it make sense?

   Have you left anything out?

   Will other people be able to follow what you have written and find it interesting?

   Ask someone else to read it.

   Look for spelling mistakes.

7. give the students the chance to re-work a piece of writing if and when possible

8. make a constructive comment on the students work?

   A constructive comment can emphasise the achievements of the student, it can give encouragement so that they will develop their writing skills. At the same time the comment should identify areas that need attention in order that further learning may take place – be selective in the number that you have for each piece of work.

   Written comments could also be backed up by an oral comment during the course of a lesson to the whole group of students if applicable or perhaps on an individual basis. Time can be a constraint here.

9. use a common set of symbols to point out technical errors?

To achieve consistency throughout the school the following symbols have been suggested as the Business Studies Department have to use these for public examinations.

Marks to be placed in the margin

lc = lower case   uc or CAPS = upper case   NP or // = new paragraph

⅄ = when a letter needs inserting   s = spelling mistake

Marks to be used in the text

_____ = under letters to be altered

// or [= to be placed before the first word where a new paragraph is needed.

10. use a variety of techniques to encourage successful language use?

Appendix C

Model of Language Presented to the MK School Language Across The Curriculum Committee

LANGUAGE(S) WRITING READING
SPEAKING LISTENING

MAKING TEXTS

1. COMPOSING

logic /order/arrangement /sequence/organisation/consistency/progression

appropriate length

relevance

paragraphing

sub-headings

openings/endings

columns

indentations

structure of sentences in a paragraph

variety of sentence structure

signal relation between paragraphs

stories: event, opening, character, ending, setting, suspense

sentence structure appropriate to writing not speech

appropriate grammatical and lexical features

viewpoints

shaping of complex material

2. CRAFTING/SECRETARIAL/PRESENTATION

present appropriate, clear and attractive work using handwriting, typing, word processor,

art work, graphics, desk top publishing

act from verbal instructions

complete proper task

layout – heading, title

date

rule-off

legible handwriting – consistent upper or lower case, joined up or print

spelling skills: check spelling, look up words, use computer checker, spot patterns in spelling and between words e.g. prefixes, suffixes, relation between meaning and spelling, common roots and foreign words

punctuation as a guide to the reader

syntax/grammar in sentences

vocabulary appropriate to the purpose/subject matter/style

editing/redrafting/ assess own effectiveness

use diagrams

use data

use symbols

3. VOICE

style: avoid repetition except for emphasis, use altered word order, striking effects

rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, fluency

tone

point of view

range of presentation strategies

4. COMMUNICATING TEXTS

making sense

message communicated – purpose achieved

accuracy/precision

clarity/informativeness

persuasiveness

originality

imagination

creativity

confidence

body language – facial expression, gesture, tone of voice, eye contact

appropriateness to audience and context

entertainment value

attractiveness

audience response

5. RESPONDING TO TEXTS

empathy

language awareness

recognising bias

accuracy of interpretation

evaluation

understanding

concentration

critical and self-critical judgement

literary analysis

summarising

taking notes

formulating a consensus

responding to instructions

answering questions

wide and fluent reading

inferring and deducing

using previous knowledge

recognising cues

discussing text, plot, character and theme

use of language and structure

recall details

Contexts of Language Use in School

A. FORMATS

notice/label/slogan

poster

story

form

contract

cartoon

diagram

table/grid

project

poem

computer programme

puzzle – crossword, wordsearch, maze

interview

survey

essay/factual account

exercise e.g. completion/answering questions/putting in letters a,b,c, etc/true & false/

transformations e.g. 'je' to 'nous' in French

questions and answer

discussion

debate

write up/report

notes

conversation

speech

announcement

performance

letter

post card

message

captions/labelling

list or sequence

paradigm

diary/personal record

biography

autobiography

play

guide book

brochure

pamphlet

review

advert

planning sheets (science)

report sheets (science)

recipe

response to written challenge (science)

'view of a solution' (science)

'account of actions taken to bring about solutions' (science)

action plan

hypothesis

report/record of achievement

results

evaluation/self-assessment

bar chart

pictogram

pie chart

line graph

B. MEDIA

speech

print

tape

video

TV

computer

blackboard

overhead projector

typewriter

film

slide

photo

drama

C. AUDIENCES FOR LANGUAGE USE IN SCHOOL

self

teacher(s)

other adults known and unknown

pupil(s) – individually or in groups

younger children

whole school

other schools (also abroad)

community

D. FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE USE IN SCHOOL

class

gender

'race'

setting

TECHNIQUES TO ENCOURAGE SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE USE IN SCHOOL

1. Increase pupil talk in lessons; diminish teacher talk; give talk status in the school day.
2. Mixed-sex/mixed-ability group discussions; mixed report-backs which lead on to whole class.
   discussion; teacher talks to groups rather than whole class
3. Tape monologues or dialogues; tape own work or read to teacher or another adult.
4. Read work to peer(s); discuss work with teacher and peers.
5. Share discoveries with group/class.
6. Planning and problem solving through collaboration and talk.
7. Make sense in own terms of information offered by teacher or text.
8. Wide variety of writing.
9. In a new subject, begin with talk.
10. Allow informal, relaxed, exploratory talk.
11. Use expressive writing in more subjects.
12. Encourage dialect and heritage languages as a valid means of communication: integrate ESL pupils into mainstream.
13. Scripted/improvised drama/role play/simulations.
14. Monitor boy/girl contributions to lessons.
15. Use unbiased materials and resources. Encourage pupils to analyse critically any text.
16. Use texts of varied difficulty.
17. Private reading time/silent reading.
18. Use of dual language cassettes and books, retelling of stories into or out of community languages.
19. Parents proof read/advise on ESL students.
20. Offer Community Languages at GCSE.

21. Use IT with boys to increase motivation.

22. Consider single-sex groupings to work on language development.

23. Promote the image of boys as reader/writers.

24. Talk to all pupils in the same tone without regard to gender.

25. Expect written work of a common standard from all pupils but judge content as well as presentation.

26. Display work of both sexes.

27. Ensure jargon does not deny access.

28. Use positive comments in marking: numbers gloss over gender differences and the non--linear development of language skills.

29. Enable students to listen to a range of voices, including peers.

30. Reports/profiles/records of achievement take into account all language achievement, including oral.

31. Offer books, materials and resources relevant to culture and gender.

32. Use media study in order to have students respond to audio-visual materials.

33. Students work with adults.

34. Pupils talk about experiences in and out of school.

35. Pupils present/express their opinions in a variety of contexts and in speech and writing.

36. Discussion of a range of issues in groups including interpreting others' opinions, distinguishing between fact and opinion, negotiating a consensus.

37. Pupils give instructions to other pupils.

38. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions.

39. Pupils present factual information.

40. Pupils report/summarise/present views of group.

41. Pupils reflect on own linguistic competence.

42. Pupils present work to class/assembly/parents e.g. performance readings, group or individual.

43. Assignments with specific outcomes.

44. Shared/collaborative writing.

45. Take notes of group discussions and check back with the group.
46. Debates.
47. Give a talk or speech.
48. Lead a discussion group.
49. Share criticism of a text in groups.
50. Reading aloud, fluently and with appropriate expression.
51. Locate reference materials using classification system/catalogue. Use and select reference books. Use research skills.
52. Talk and write about responses to literature.
53. Compose texts for others to read.
54. Keep records of own reading.
55. Check own work for errors; draft ideas alone/discuss with others.
56. 'Search' read for particular facts.
57. Follow an independent line of inquiry.
58. Support opinions by textual reference.
59. Read a wide variety of texts of increasing difficulty.
60. Pupil keeps file of written work in progress.
61. Teacher writes alongside pupils and shares talk about writing.
62. Do best copy of work on word processor and use printout in displays.
63. Compile own list of words used in writing.
64. Keep diaries/personal account of activities.
65. Play with language: for example in word games.
66. Write individually or in groups; discuss work; produce finished work for wider audiences.
67. Write in response to other material.
68. Discuss the history, types and purposes of writing; discuss spelling and punctuation; discuss style appropriate to subject.
69. Use thesaurus and dictionary for writing.
70. Teach orthography in connection with their writing.
71. Prepare an extended and polished piece of worth for assessment.

72. Revise, draft and edit with teacher, other adults, peers and finally alone.
73. Cooperative note-taking.
74. Make notes for other's use.
75. Consider the language of the subject: why those formats belonging to a subject are written in a certain way e.g. reports, observations, theories.
76. Make all exercises of the traditional variety communicative: i.e. rather than drills change than so that they involve introducing new, unknown or personal information.
77. Encourage pupils to express themselves in their own words
78. Give access not only to books but to newspapers, periodicals, cuttings and documents.
79. Use tapes as reference materials for those with reading difficulties.
80. Give time for specific and for exploratory reading in class.

ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE

1. Self-assessment leading to profile.
2. Peer assessment using grid, checklist, comment (written or oral) or mark.
3. Teacher assessment using tick list, grid, written or oral comment, mark.
4. Group or class assessment leading to discussion.

TARGETS

Should focus on growing points: signposts for next stage of development

SOME WAYS IN WHICH CHILDREN USE LANGUAGE IN SCHOOL

abstracting
acknowledging others' opinions
amplifying
analysing

announcing

answering

arguing a case

arguing logically

arguing rhetorically

articulating feelings

clarifying

collaborating

collecting ideas

commenting

communicating

comparing

considering theories

contrasting

cooperating

copying

criticising

cross-referencing

deducing

describing

devising research questions

directing

discussing

drafting

drawing conclusions

entertaining

exchanging views

evaluating

explaining

expressing doubt

expressing a personal point of view

expressing the significance of something

experimenting with new language

exploring

fantasising

finding out by reading or listening

formulating a consensus in discussion

formulating hypotheses

generalising

getting detail

giving detail

getting gist

giving gist

giving opinions

giving reasons

guessing

inferring

informing

interpreting

interacting

justifying

making sense

modifying ideas

making notes

narrating

organising ideas

organising thoughts

paraphrasing

persuading

planning

predicting

problem-solving

proof-reading

proposing solutions

questioning

reasoning

recalling

reciting

recording

reformulating

reflecting

reporting

requesting

rereading

retelling

responding to criticism

reviewing

reviewing own experiences

revising

selecting

shaping experience imaginatively

shaping ideas

sorting out ideas

speculating

summarising

synthesising information

testing hypotheses

theorising

trying alternative explanations

Others

listing

collating

constructing

designing

manipulating

stating

giving an account

negotiating a role|self and others

sharing ideas and experiences

Appendix D

SIMPLE CORRECTION SIGNS

43. **Target Time: 5 minutes**

Type the following passage on A5 paper (210× 146 mm) in double-line spacing, making the necessary corrections. Use indented paragraphs. Margins: Elite 20–85, Pica 10–75.

The toád is amphibious and is of heavier build than the frog. The frog has a shiny coat, while the skin of the toad is dry and dull. It is also covered in pimples which resemble the soil so that it can be overlooked easily. The toad can also sit motionless, making it difficult for any enemy to find him. Unlike the frog which makes gigantic leaps, the toad usually makes short jumps. It eats an enormous amount of food, such as Beetles, caterpillars, flies & small mice.

44. **Target Time: 8 minutes**

Type the following on A4 paper, using double-line spacing. Make the necessary corrections. Margins: Elite 20–85, Pica 10–75.

THE GROWTH OF BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham, the city of a thousand trades - this is a proud but not untrue boast; yet at the time of the domesday survey it was a small Hamlet valued at 20 shillings. The citys growth has been relatively slow.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were about 13,000 people. Today there are over a million.

Once it was a Roman settlement - we still have a reminder of the Romans in Icknelid Street, which runs through one of our densely populated suburbs. The Bull Ring, too, takes us back in time, as it was here that the first inhabitants built their houses and farmed their land. A little church stood on the site of St. Martin's. A cherry orchard gave Cherry Street its name, while potatoes and corn grew near the town hall. In fact, looking back, it is difficult to believe that so short a time ago the city was a place of green fields, grazing cows and sheep.

Proofreaders' marks

When amendments have to be made in typewritten or handwritten work of which fair copy is to be typed, these may be indicated in the original copy by proofreaders' marks. To avoid confusion, the mark may also be placed in the margin against the line in which the correction is to be made. The Royal Society of Arts use only the stet signs, ie, (✓), in the margin, but other examining bodies may use any or all of the examples that follow.

Mark which may be in margin	*Meaning*	*Mark in text*	
lc	Lower case = small letter(s)	— /	under letter(s) to be altered or struck through letter(s)
uc or CAPS	Upper case—capital letter(s)	═ /	under letter(s) to be altered or struck through letter(s)
♂	Delete (take out)	/	through letter(s) or word(s)
NP or //	New paragraph	// or [	placed before the first word of a new paragraph
Stet or (✓)	Let it stand, ie, type the word(s) that has been crossed out and has a dotted or broken line underneath	----	under word(s) struck out
Run on	No new paragraph required. Carry straight on	⟲	
⅄	Caret—insert letter, word(s) omitted	⅄	placed where the omission occurs
⁀‿	Close up—less space	⁀‿	between letters or words
trs	Transpose, ie, change order of words or letters as marked		between letters or words, sometimes numbered
#	Insert space	⅄	

PONTYPOOL If a word is not clear in the text, it may have been written in the margin in capitals. The word should be typed in lower case, or as indicated in the original script.

Appendix E

LANGUAGE POLICY

A Language Policy is a statement agreed by the existing staff of a school about what they see as desirable aims for language development given the present and future language needs and interests of their students across the whole curriculum.

The language policy should include the three profile components for English as outlined in the National Curriculum namely, Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing. Within Writing there are attainment targets relating to spelling, handwriting and presentation and it is these that we have considered to date. A marking policy has also been developed and is to be used throughout the school.

Draft Marking Policy

This document has been produced by a working party in consultation with the staff of the school. A school marking policy involves all staff in an agreed approach to assessing students written work in all areas of the curriculum. In formulating a marking policy a broad meaning of the word marking must be adopted. Written comments are not the only form of assessment to which students respond.

The marking and ensuing dialogue between teacher and students is an essential part of the teaching/learning process. It avoids confusion in the minds of the students, ensures continuity of approach and provides a model by which students can begin to assess their own written work. This, in turn, could lead to an improvement in the quality of their work. A Marking Policy devised in this way would have very close links with the Record of Achievement.

Considerations to be made when setting and marking students work

When marking please:

1. make the purpose of the writing task clear to the students when asking them to do a piece of work?

2. explain the way in which the written work is to be assessed?
3. choose what your main priority(ies) is/are when assessing the work? Are you assessing:

   Content

   the quality of what is being said?

   is the style appropriate/relevant to the task?

   Organisation

   sequence of thoughts, sentence structure, syntax?

   Handwriting/presentation.

   Spelling

   Grammar

   Punctuation
4. mark to: either acknowledge that you have read the work? or as part of a diagnostic process?
5. consider marking: as the students are writing?

   when the work is finished? with the student present/absent?
6. help the students to develop their own strategies for improving their own work?

   suggestions

   Have you read it through?

   Does it make sense?

   Have you left anything out?

   Will other people be able to follow what you have written and find it interesting?

   Ask someone else to read it.

   Look for spelling mistakes.
7. give the students the chance to re-work a piece of writing if and when possible.
8. make a constructive comment on the students work?

   A constructive comment can emphasise the achievements of the student, it

can give encouragement so that they will develop their writing skills. At the same time the comment should identify areas that need attention in order that further learning may take place – be selective in the number that you have for each piece of work.

Written comments could also be backed up by an oral comment during the course of a lesson to the whole group of students if applicable or perhaps on an individual basis. Time can be a constraint here.

9. use a common set of symbols to point out technical errors?

   To achieve consistency throughout the school the following symbols have been suggested as the Business Studies Department have to use these for public examinations.

   Marks to be placed in the margin

   lc = lower case uc or CAPS = upper case   NP or // = new paragraph

   when a letter needs inserting = ⋌   s = spelling mistake

   Marks to be used in the text

   _____ = under letters to be altered.

   // or [to be placed before the first word where a new paragraph is needed.

10. To mark in pencil.

Presentation of Work

The following Statements of Attainment should be accessed by the students in this school when they are presenting their work. These Attainment Targets apply to the whole curriculum of the school. It is important that when we as teachers are planning and delivering the lesson that we bear these in mind.

Handwriting and Presentation Statements

LEVEL	*STATEMENT OF ATTAINMENT 4/5*
2	to produce legible upper and lower case letters in one style and use them consistently;

	to produce letters that are recognisably formed and properly orientated and that have clear ascenders and descenders where necessary;
3	to begin to produce clear and legible joined up writing;
4	to produce more fluent joined up writing in independent work;
S	to produce clear and legible handwriting in printed and cursive styles;
6	to write fluently and legibly;
	to show some ability to use any available presentational devices that are appropriate to the task so that the finished work is presented clearly and attractively;
7	write fluently and legibly;
	to show an increased ability to present finished work appropriately, clearly and attractively.

Presentation of Written Work

1. The date to be written in full at the right hand side of the page.
2. Name to be written on the left if using paper.
3. Heading/title/date/name to be underlined. It may be on the same line as the date and the name.
4. Miss a line underneath the title.
5. Rule off at the end of a piece of work.

Presentation of Graphs

1. Use a sharp pencil preferably HB.
2. Use a ruler.
3. Graphs should be drawn on graph paper.
4. The page should be filled with the graph.
5. The title of the graph is to include the type of graph that is being used – A Line graph to show .....
6. Both axes to be labelled with a name and the units that are being used.
7. A scale is required and this must go up evenly.

8. A key is needed especially for Pie graphs.
9. A compass should be used for Pie graphs.
10. The points on a Line graph should be marked across.
11. The line joining the crosses should be a best fit (smooth) line, not dot to dot.
12. There should be a space between each bar on a Bar graph. This space should be uniform.

Presentation of Diagrams

1. The diagram should be drawn with a sharp pencil – HB.
2. A ruler used for straight lines.
3. Diagrams should not be too small – teachers to advise.
4. A title that is underlined should be added to each diagram.
5. The labels on the diagram should be in ink.
6. The lines for the labels should be in pencil.

Folders and Exercise Books

1. There should be no graffiti on the books/folders.
2. The front of the book/folder should have the following:

   Name Form Teachers Name Subject

   Set Room where the lesson takes place

   Day and time of the lesson.

Handwriting

It is important that we all try to encourage the students to produce a high standard of handwriting. The Year 8 students are tested to determine reading and spelling ages at the start of the first term. At this time a sample of handwriting will be obtained from the student for analysis. Any student who do not seem to be able to produce handwriting which meets the National Curriculum presentation criteria will be given the opportunity to receive extra help from the Special Needs department. Any teacher who feels that there may be a problem with handwriting *structure*

rather than *presentation* can refer the student to the Special Needs support staff.

The procedure for referral to Special Needs for advice is in the usual way (Referral forms are in both all offices). When making a referral please append an example/s of the work that illustrates your cause for concern.

Before you decide to make a referral will you please make certain that you have followed and implemented the guidelines for the presentation of work.

Spelling

The following Statements of Attainment should be accessed by the students in this school when producing written work. These Attainment Targets apply to the whole curriculum of the school.

LEVEL	*ATTAINMENT TARGET 4/5*
3	to be able to spell correctly, in the course of their own writing simple polysyllabic words they use regularly which observe common patterns; to recognise and use correctly regular patterns for vowel sounds and common letter strings; to show a growing awareness of word families and their relationships; to revise and redraft their writing, begin to check the accuracy of their spelling;
4	spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, words which display other main patterns in English spelling.
5	to spell correctly, in the course of their own writing, words of greater complexity; to check final drafts of writing for misspelling and other errors of presentation;
6	to recognise that words with related meanings may have related spellings, even though they sound different; recognise that the spelling of unstressed syllables can often be deduced from the spelling of a stressed syllable in a related word;

to check final drafts of writing for misspelling and other errors of presentation;

7 to spell and understand the meaning of common roots that have been borrowed from other languages and that play an important role in word building; recognise that where words have been borrowed in the last 400 years, there are some characteristic sound symbol relationships that reflect the word's origin;
to check final drafts of writing for misspelling and other errors of presentation.

In order to try and improve and develop the students with respect to spelling the following suggestions have been made for teachers to use at their own discretion/to cater for the needs of the students

1. Every classroom should be equipped with a dictionary.
2. It should be requested that students bring their own dictionaries.
3. We should encourage the use of dictionaries.
4. As teachers we should try a series of ideas/techniques to encourage students to learn from the spelling mistakes that they have made.
5. Are there anecdotes you can use to help them remember the problem words?
6. Try to make the students aware of spelling as an integral part of every lesson as and when appropriate. Write the correct spelling on the board or draw their attention to potential mistakes.
7. Encourage the students to ask the teacher for the correct spelling.
8. Ask the students as individuals or as a whole to say the word they are trying to spell.
9. Ask the students to write their spelling mistakes at the back of their exercise book or folder.
10. For those subjects with no folder or exercise book use the sheet for spellings in the Radfax.
11. Provide a Technical Vocabulary check list for each new topic/area of study.

12. Make a display in the classroom of commonly misspelt words/new words for the topic/area of study.
13. For each teacher to give the students a short spelling test of the words associated with the subject. Possibly include commonly misspelt words.
14. The form tutor may wish to give the form a spelling test of commonly misspelt words. Those words being drawn from the student books.

<u>Reading</u>

<u>*The aims of reading*</u>

- to find pleasure in reading for interest, enjoyment and information
- to develop, have confidence in reading
- to extend experiences and insights through engagement with different kinds of literature including poetry, plays, fiction and non fiction
- to develop the ability to read a range of materials fluently and with understanding using a variety of reading strategies (skimming, scanning, etc.) as appropriate
- to value reading for its own sake and as a means of learning throughout the curriculum

<u>*Points to consider*</u>

1. In a school with a normal spread of distribution in terms of ability, 50% of the students will have a reading age below their chronological age. At the extremes of this range there may be students who have a non functional reading age (those at the lowest level) whilst there are students whose reading age is extremely advanced.
2. Software (BBC Textgrader) is available in school to help determine the read-ability of text in whatever form. The software itself has limitations. Discs available in Hall Offices.
3. Staff need to be aware of the suitability of the texts presented to students either in textbooks, novels or worksheets.

4. All staff should aim to give the students access to a rich book environment to encourage reading and investigation.
5. Some students may read the text with limited understanding. Staff need to check in the classroom to see if understanding has taken place, using techniques such as question/answer, cloze procedure.
6. In order to create an environment in which reading is encouraged, staff may consider the following strategies:
   - creating an atmosphere of trust in the classroom in order to
   - ensure that students are not made fun of when reading
   - providing a wide range of books on a topic
   - providing thought provoking materials that encourage investigation
   - providing books on display
   - selecting books that are appropriate to the ability of the student
   - encouraging the use of/visit to the library
   - using different reading strategies as part of the lesson
7. Staff might consider involving parents in this process of encouraging students to read.
8. To ensure that development in reading takes place we could employ some of the following in our lessons bearing in mind the type of group-mixed ability, setted:
   - reading in pairs
   - reading out own work
   - reading around the class
   - asking what the words mean
   - pronouncing the new words
   - quiet reading
   - teacher reading to the class
   - teaching a vocabulary list

Writing

As a staff we understand writing to be a growing ability to construct and convey meaning in written language matching style to audience and purpose (National Curriculum).

Aims for Writing

- to write for a range of purposes
- to use styles and forms of writing appropriate to the particular purposes and intended audiences
- to organise the content of what is written in ways appropriate to the purposes
- to value writing as a personal medium for exploring ideas
- to develop confidence in the use of a range of strategies that will help to acquire mastery of spelling, punctuation and syntax

The reasons for writing are

- to communicate
- for creative pleasure
- as a stage in the learning process
- a means of sorting out thoughts on paper
- to record information and ideas.

Development in writing can be brought about by:

- creating an atmosphere in school which engenders enthusiasm, pleasure and willingness to write
- the teacher writing with the students
- the students redrafting their work with partners
- providing the opportunity for the students to share their work and discuss it constructively with others
- planning and organising the classroom environment to allow for a variety of learning situations

- getting the students to write for a variety of audiences
- displaying the work attractively to encourage passers by to read it.
- giving the opportunity to write in different forms for a variety of purposes:

notes	letters	plans	recording observations
instructions	poetry	diary	descriptions
reports	plays	questions	explanations

- writing in association with

pictures	graphs
plans	diagrams

- allowing the students to continue with a piece of work if they find it enjoyable and wish to finish it or extend themselves

Suggestions for helping students to improve their writing

- allow them a choice in choosing the subjects
- teach them the mechanics of redrafting
- show them how to talk about their work
- let them be assured of a helpful critical audience
- be a teacher who is a helper not a judge
- help them to bring their work to a satisfactory conclusion
- show them the skills that are needed when the problem occurs
- the end product does not have to be in a written form - use a word processor, tape recorder, video
- make a provision to keep and/or display work that is of a special significance
- suggest that such work is included with end of year Interim Summary to parents

Speaking and Listening

The development of pupils' understanding of the spoken word and the capacity to express themselves effectively in a variety of speaking and listening activities,

matching style and response to audience and purpose.

From level 7 pupils should be using Standard English, wherever appropriate, to meet the Statements of Attainment.

Aims for Speaking and Listening

- To use appropriate forms of speech with fluency, confidence and clarity:
  in a variety of groupings and contexts for a variety of audiences
  for a range of purposes of increasing complexity and demand

and

- to develop the capacity to listen with understanding, attention and courtesy in a similar range of contexts and for a similar range of purposes.

Developing Speaking and Listening skills can be brought about by:

- placing a high value on the use of appropriate talk in the learning process e.g. in group work
- providing the opportunity to enable students to participate in all forms of talk in a variety of learning situations
- ensuring that they are on task when participating in these activities
- being consistent in the use of rules when allowing talk in the learning situation - listen when someone else is talking, wait until they have finished talking before beginning to talk.
- assessing the nature of talk by asking is it on task? is it clear? relevant? is the vocabulary the same that we have given/taught?
- giving the students the opportunity to talk to different audiences through
  role play
  group work
  speeches
- correcting students' talk without destroying their confidence
- using talk as teachers also for giving instructions, information, developing ideas and discipline

- creating atmosphere where it is safe, calm, people are courteous and where listening can take place
- making the students aware of what they are listening for

APPENDIX F

Analysis of MK School Language Policy

Part One: Marking, Presentation, Handwriting, Spelling

Technical	Dialogic
1. Marking	
Teacher determines purpose of written task.	Teacher-student dialogue, during or after marking.
Teacher explains method of assessment.	Improvements recorded in Record of Achievement.
Teacher assesses,	
Marking for 'diagnosis.'	
Student learns to assess him/herself using teacher's methods.	Positive written/oral comment.
2a) Presentation	
Clear handwriting	
Joined-up writing.	
Clear, attractive presentation.	
Teacher decides what fluency and appropriateness are.	
Presentation details (date, title etc)	
Details for doing graphs and diagrams.	
Treatment of folder and exercise books.	

2b) Handwriting

Part of testing in Year 8.

If does not conform to NC, have Special Needs help.

Attainment under NC assessed.

2c) Spelling

Strategies for correcting and testing spelling
all based on isolating single words.

Provision of a dictionary.

Part Two: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

3. Reading

Skim and scan.

Measurement of reading age to see if 'nonfunctional'

Use of IT to assess readability.

Use of question and answer/cloze techniques to assess understanding.

Books appropriate to ability.

Use of 'reading strategies' in lesson

Asking about single word meanings pronouncing single words, teaching a vocab. list.

Pleasure in reading.

Confidence in reading.

Read a range of material

Value reading for own sake, for learning.

Rich book environment.

Atmosphere of trust.

Encouraging investigation.

Books on display.

Use of library.

Involvement of parents.

Paired reading.

Reading to audiences.

Quiet reading.

Teacher reads to class.

4. Writing -

'Construct' Meaning

Range of strategies for mastering spelling,punctuation, syntax.

Writing as a 'stage in the learning process'

Mechanics of redrafting.

Show them how to talk about their work.

Show skills for dealing with problems.

Convey meaning.

Match style to audience and purpose.

Write for range of purposes in variety of forms.

Value writing as personal medium to explore ideas.

Communicate, write for pleasure

Sort out thoughts on paper.

Record information and ideas.

Enthusiasm, pleasure, willingness.

Teacher writes with student.

Redrafting with partner.

Sharing and discussing work.

Classroom organised for a variety of learning situations.

Variety of audiences.

Display for others, parents see work at home.

Students allowed to decide how work will

	continue/end.
	Students choose subjects.
	Audience helpfully critical.
	Teacher helps students to conclude work.
	Use variety of media for outcome.
5. Speaking and Listening	
Use of appropriate forms of speech.	Variety of groupings, contexts, audiences.
'on task', clear, relevant.	Range of purposes.
Consistent use of rules.	Listen with understanding, attention,
Correcting talk.	courtesy.
Talk used to give instructions,	Value talk.
information and discipline.	Participation in all forms of talk.
Make student aware of what they	Safe, calm atmosphere.
are listening for	Support confidence.

School Language Policy

Summary

A. The Technical

1. Teacher decides what the following are: purpose, fluency, clarity, relevance, appropriateness and suitability.
2. Teacher/School/National Curriculum control and apply assessment, measuring and testing. Teacher/School/National Curriculum decide the techniques of assessment, measurement and testing.
3. Student merely takes over the teacher's methods e.g. assessment.
4. 'Skills' are isolated from meaning (handwriting, presentation, spelling, punctuation, syntax).
5. Teacher expects students to have or copy competences without engaging in the process which enables the student to learn them (e.g. use of dictionary, 'investigation').

6. Assumption that there is one specifiable kind of ability, readability and learning process.
7. Teacher determines which are appropriate books and materials.
8. Teacher determines what 'reading strategies' are.
9. Learning seen as 'machine-like process: 'mechanics' of redrafting, 'construction' of meaning.
10. Work must be 'on task', deviations from task regarded as valueless.

B. The Dialogic

1. Dialogue about task in hand.
2. Dialogue feeds into Record of Achievement.
3. Positive comments on work.
4. Personal purposes for language activities: pleasure, confidence, value, investigation, exploring own ideas, communicating, recording information, enthusiasm, willingness.
5. Meet a wide and rich variety of materials and genres.
6. Atmosphere of trust, safety, calmness, confidence.
7. Apprenticeship approaches modelled by teacher, parents, other students.
8. Range of audiences, purposes, forms, contexts, learning situations, media, groupings.
9. Redrafting, sharing, discussing.
10. Student involved in deciding subject of work and direction of work.
11. Listening with understanding, attention, courtesy.
12. Value and participate in talk.

The analysis and summary above demonstrate that the technical and the dialogic exist side by side in the language policy and, as I have implied, in everyday practice in the school. On the evidence of the language policy, they can exist even in the same lesson.

This coexistence however produces tensions or contradictions within practice.

These are, I suggest, three in number. First, the teacher is seen both as the definer of tasks, materials, learning, reading, writing, speaking and listening and of appropriate assessment *but* the teacher is also seen as the facilitator of situations where dialogue and personal goals will be in operation. Secondly the teacher shows and the student imitates *but* the teacher is also supposed to model and facilitate the apprenticeship approach where the aim is student independence. Thirdly, technical skills are separated off from dialogic activity *but* language development is supposed to arise socially, that is dialogically, from talk, sharing, redrafting for a variety of audiences, that is from the making of meanings.

APPENDIX G: THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Reading and Writing Survey

Your Name:

1. Where you live:
2. How long have you lived in Milton Keynes?
3 Do you know where your parents and grandparents were born?
4 How did you learn to read and write?
5. How good are you at reading and writing?
6 How much better would you like to be?
7. How do you think reading and writing will help you at this school?
8. How does it help you in your life outside school?
9. How is reading and writing here different from at middle school?
10. Do you read what other pupils write? If so, where?
11. Which newspapers does your family get?
12. Which newspapers, magazines or comics do you read?
13. Do you buy any of these yourself?
14. Do you or your family have books at home?
15. Does your family buy you books to help you at school?
16. What is your favourite book?
17. Is there another book almost as good?
18. Why do you like these books?
19. What would you like to read that you haven't yet?
20. Is there something that you think is too difficult to read at the moment, but that you would like to read one day?
21. Do you belong to a library?
22. If so, how often do you go there?
23. What sort of books do you look for there?

24. How many do you get out at a time?

25. Do you ever buy books?

26. If so, how often?

27. Where do you buy them from?

28. Where do you buy comics or magazines from?

29. Does anyone else ever buy you books?

30. How often do you read things not connected with school?

31. Do you listen to the radio?

32 What do you like listening to?

33 What are your hobbies?

34 Do you have a computer at home?

35. What do you like to watch on TV?

36. What sort of music do you like?

37. How often do you go to the cinema?

38. What was the last film you saw?

39. What is your favourite film?

40. Do you watch videos?

41. What kind of videos do you like?

42. What is your favourite video?

43. Do you like to have labels or badges on your clothes?

44. How do you think you will use reading and writing when you leave school?

45. Why do you think people should learn to read and write?

46. Would you, if you had the choice?

47. Should everybody be able to read and write?

48. What will happen when the whole world can read and write?

APPENDIX H

RESULTS OF THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: where the totals do not equate with the n umber of students, they represent the number of replies of different kinds. Direct quotes from students' questionnaires are identified with inverted commas.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

a) Family, dwellings, early reading

Table 6.12. Where students live

Settlement	**Number of students**
Estates	21
Old Town (Wolverton)	5
Villages	3
Total	**29**

Table 6.13. How long students have lived in Milton Keynes

Answer	**Number of students**
10 years or more	17
5 years or more	5
Less than 5 years	6
'quite a long time'	1
Total	**29**

Table 6.14. Origins of students' parents and grandparents

Place	Number of replies
Not known	15
London	6
Blank	3
Ireland	2
Barbados	2
Pakistan	1
Rawalpindi	1
Perth	1
Hemel Hempstead	1
Northampton	1
Newcastle	1
Nairobi	1
India	1
Total	**36**

Table 6.15. Where students learned to read and write

Site/Agent	Boys	Girls	Total
School	9	4	13
Home and school	1	5	6
Mother and school	2	1	3
Mother	1	1	2
Not known	1	0	1
Blank	0	1	1
Parents	0	1	1
Reading and copying	0	1	1
Father and school	0	1	1
Total	**14**	**15**	**29**

TABLE 6.16. How students think learning helps outside school

How it helps	Boys	Girls	Total
Get a job/help in a job	1	5	6
Write letters	2	1	3
Read books	2	1	3
Read signs and notices	1	2	3
Homework	1	1	2
Read newspapers	2	0	2
Yes/a lot	0	2	2
If you get lost	0	1	1
To relax	0	1	1
Reading	1	0	1
Not a lot	1	0	1
Read letters	1	0	1
Read magazines	1	0	1
Find out what's going on	1	0	1
Brilliant	1	0	1
Don't use it outside school	0	1	1
Work better	0	1	1
Go shopping	0	1	1
Read to sister	0	1	1
Totals	**15**	**18**	**33**

Table 6.17. Newspapers read by students' families

Paper	Number of Mentions
The Sun	14
Daily Mirror	9
News of the World	6
MK Mirror	3
MK Herald	3
MK Citizen	3
Mirror Property	2
Free papers	2
Today	2
Daily Star	2
Sunday Sport	1
Guardian	1
Times	1
Sunday Mail	1
Dog World	1
Observer	1
People	1
Sunday Mirror	1
Independent	1
Business Telegraph	1
Daily Mail	1
Telegraph	1
TES	1
None	1
Total	**60**

Table 6.18. Kinds of newspapers read by students' families

Kind of paper	Number of mentions
Tabloid	38
Local free papers	13
Broadsheet	6
Specialist	2
None	1
Total	**60**

Table 6.19. Newspapers, comics and magazines read by students

Publication	Boys	Girls	Total
Smash Hits	0	6	6
Sun	2	3	5
Beano	4	1	5
Blank	0	2	2
Daily Mirror	1	1	2
Roy of the Rovers	2	0	2
Dandy	2	0	2
None at all	2	0	2
RAD (skateboard magazine)	2	0	2
Anglers Mail	2	0	2
Angling Times	1	0	1
The Paper	1	0	1
Any newspaper	1	0	1
2000 AD	1	0	1
Transformers	1	0	1
Free papers	1	0	1
Computer magazines	1	0	1

Truck magazines	1	0	1
Old different magazines	1	0	1
Tiger	1	0	1
Fishing magazines	1	0	1
Custom Cars	1	0	1
Girl	0	1	1
Number One	0	1	1
Sinclair Spectrum Magazine	0	1	1
Bros Mag	0	1	1
Dog World	0	1	1
Scoop	0	1	1
Times	0	1	1
My Guy	0	1	1
Just Seventeen	0	1	1
Discovery	0	1	1
News of the World	0	1	1
Look-in	0	1	1
Any comics at home	0	1	1
Looks	0	1	1
Mizz	0	1	1
Walt Disney comics and magazines	0	1	1
No comics, no magazines	0	1	1
Totals	**29**	**30**	**59**

Table 6.20. Types of newspapers, magazines and comics read by students

Type	Boys	Girls	Total
Pop	0	8	8
Tabloids	3	5	8
Comics(cartoon)	6	2	8
Magazines ('boys interests')	8	0	8
Magazines ('girls' interests')	0	7	7
Nothing/Blank	2	3	5
Comics ('boys interests')	5	0	5
Newspaper(s) -unspecified	2	0	2
Computer magazines	1	1	2
Free papers	1	0	1
Magazines - unspecified	1	0	1
Childrens' newspaper	0	1	1
Broadsheet	0	1	1
Part-work - knowledge	0	1	1
Comics- unspecified	0	1	1
Totals	**29**	**30**	**59**

Table 6.21. Whether students buy their own newspapers, comics and magazines

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	9	6	15
No	4	3	7
Sometimes	0	4	4
Blank	1	1	2
Yes and no	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.22. Whether students have books at home

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	9	11	20
Yes, a lot	1	2	3
No	2	1	3
Self but not parents	1	0	1
Self and father only	1	0	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.23. Whether students families buy them books to help at school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	6	9	15
Sometimes	4	3	7
No	4	2	6
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.24. Students' favourite books

Book Title	Boys	Girls	Total
The Twits	1	0	1
CS Lewis tales	1	0	1
Computer ones	1	0	1
Encido Peda Brown Boy Detective	1	0	1
Handles	1	0	1
The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole	1	0	1
The Hobbit	1	0	1
Fighting Fantasy Books	1	0	1
Snooker books	1	0	1
Domain	1	0	1
Rats	1	0	1
Don't Call Me Chicken	1	0	1
Any fishing books	1	0	1
Custom Cars	1	0	1
Spaceballs/Big Foot and the Hendersons	0	1	1
Doggy Book	0	1	1
Goodnight Mr Tom/BFG	0	1	1
The Voyage of the Dawntreader	0	1	1
Danny's Secret Pony	0	1	1
Black Beauty	0	1	1
Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves	0	1	1
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	0	1	1
Mickey's White Christmas	0	1	1
The Three Little Women	0	1	1
Superfudge	0	1	1
None	0	1	1
Blank	1	3	4
Totals	**15**	**15**	**30**

Table 6.25. Students' choices of other books almost as good

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
No	5	4	9
Blank	1	2	3
Silver Citadel	1	0	1
Space books	1	0	1
Blackberry Farm	1	0	1
The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole	1	0	1
Beano Annuals	1	0	1
Lair	1	0	1
What Katie Did	0	1	1
Enid Blyton books	0	1	1
On the Flipside	0	1	1
Love stories	0	1	1
Agaton Sax and the Big Rig	0	1	1
The Twits	0	1	1
Huey, Dewey And Louie at the Park	0	1	1
Boy	0	1	1
Yes	1	1	2
Totals	**13**	**15**	**28**

Table 6.26. Why students like these books

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Interesting	2	5	7
Funny	1	5	6
Relate to a hobby	4	1	5
Seem true	3	1	4
Exciting	1	2	3
Adventurous	1	2	3
Blank	0	3	3
Good	1	1	2
Like that kind of book	1	1	2
Well thought-up	1	0	1
Well written	1	0	1
Always something happening	1	0	1
Could really happen	1	0	1
Don't know	1	0	1
Serious	0	1	1
Have a meaning	0	1	1
Imaginative	0	1	1
Totals	**19**	**24**	**43**

Table 6.27. Students membership of a library

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	8	12	20
No	6	2	8
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.28. Frequency of library use among students

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Once a week or at weekend	1	5	6
Twice a month	1	2	3
Once a month	4	2	6
Once every two months	1	0	1
Not much	2	0	2
Blank	2	1	3
Don't belong to one	2	2	4
When books are finished	0	2	2
Every time in city centre	1	0	1
Regularly	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.29. The kinds of books look for in libraries

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Blank	2	3	5
All kinds/any	2	2	4
Asterix	3	0	3
Story books	1	2	3
Science fiction	1	1	2
Fishing	2	0	2
None	2	0	2
Skateboard books	1	0	1
Fact	1	0	1
Fighting fantasy	1	0	1
Sports	1	0	1
Willard Price animal adventures	1	0	1
James Herbert	1	0	1
Funny books	0	1	1

Marmalade Atkins	0	1	1
Depends what I feel like reading	0	1	1
Judy Blume	0	1	1
Enid Blyton	0	1	1
Adventure books	0	1	1
Love stories	0	1	1
Sweet Valley High	0	1	1
Sweet Dreams	0	1	1
Teenage novels	0	1	1
Mystery books	0	1	1
Totals	**19**	**19**	**38**

Table 6.30. How many books students take out at a time

Number of books	Boys	Girls	Total
6	4	1	5
4-6	0	3	3
up to 6	1	0	1
4	2	1	3
3	0	5	5
1 or 2	1	1	2
1	1	1	2
None/don't	2	0	2
Blank	2	3	5
Depends	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.31. Whether students buy books

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	10	9	19
Sometimes	1	4	5
Not a lot/not really	2	1	3
No	1	0	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.32. How often students buy books

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Not a lot/not very often	2	4	6
Once a month	2	1	3
Don't know	2	1	3
Every 3 months	1	1	2
Every time I can	1	1	2
Every week	2	0	2
Every year or so/once a year	0	2	2
Every month	1	0	1
When ill and can't go to school	1	0	1
No	1	0	1
About one a month	1	0	1
Depends on money	0	1	1
Two a year	0	1	1
One a week	0	1	1
Once a week	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.33. Where students buy books

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
W H Smith	2	7	9
Book shops	2	4	6
Shops	1	2	3
Cranfields	2	0	2
Fagins	2	0	2
City centre	1	1	2
Newsagent (W H Smith etc)	1	0	1
Friend gets them	1	0	1
All over the place	1	0	1
Stars	1	0	1
Nowhere	1	0	1
M & W	1	0	1
City centre bookshop	1	0	1
Spar	1	0	1
All around Wolverton and Greenleys	1	0	1
Dog shows	0	1	1
Library	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Can't remember	0	1	1
Totals	**19**	**18**	**37**

Table 6.34. Where students buy comics and magazines

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Newsagents	2	7	9
Blank	1	2	3
M & W	2	1	3
Corner Shop	1	1	2
Spar	2	0	2
W H Smith	0	2	2
Martins	0	2	2
Don't get any	2	0	2
Emerton's	1	0	1
Post Office	1	0	1
Shops in Wolverton and Greenleys	1	0	1
Shops	1	0	1
Great Holm Stores	0	1	1
Local Shops	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**17**	**21**

Table 6.35. Whether students have books bought for them

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	8	8	16
Sometimes	1	0	1
At Christmas from uncles and aunts	1	0	1
From family at Christmas or Birthday	0	1	1
Mother at Christmas	1	0	1
No	1	0	1
Yes, parents	1	0	1
Yes, aunts and uncles	1	0	1
Mum, Dad, Nan	0	1	1
For Christmas	0	1	1
Yes, relatives	0	1	1
Yes, Nan and aunties	0	1	1
Yes, Nan	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.36. How often students read things not connected with school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Every night	2	3	5
Quite often	3	1	4
Every day	2	1	3
A lot	2	1	3
Sometimes	1	1	2
I don't know	0	2	2
If I get bored	0	2	2
All the time	1	0	1
Most nights	1	0	1
'Most often'	1	0	1
Every week	1	0	1
Most of the time	0	1	1
Very often	0	1	1
Lots of times	0	1	1
Mostly read school related things	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.37. Where students read other students' writing

Site	Boys	Girls	Total
No	9	3	12
Work on wall at school	2	3	5
Generally at school	1	4	5
Books and comics	2	0	2
At their house	0	1	1
Anywhere	0	1	1
Middle School	0	1	1
Graffiti	0	1	1
Home and school	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.38. Whether students listen to the radio

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	7	11	18
No	3	3	6
Sometimes	3	1	4
Only to the music	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.39. What students like listening to

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Music	5	2	7
Pop music	4	2	6
Radio 1	1	3	4
Blank	0	2	2
Chiltern Hot FM	1	0	1
Quizzes	0	1	1
Walkman	0	1	1
Nothing	0	1	1
'Tele'	0	1	1
Top 40	0	1	1
Saturday Night Fry	0	1	1
Radioactive	0	1	1
'Nothing I like watching'	0	1	1
Capital	0	1	1
98-96 (Latest music)	0	1	1
Kylie Minogue	0	1	1
Totals	**11**	**20**	**31**

Table 6.40. Students' hobbies

Hobby	Boys	Girls	Total
Swimming	1	9	10
Football	6	0	6
Fishing	5	0	5
Badminton	1	3	4
Reading	0	4	4

Modelling	3	0	3
Tennis	1	2	3
Athletics/Running	1	1	2
Skateboarding	2	0	2
Judo	2	0	2
None	1	1	2
Horse riding	0	2	2
Cycling/Bike riding	2	0	2
Computers	1	0	1
Cricket	1	0	1
Breeding small animals	1	0	1
BMX	1	0	1
Pool	1	0	1
Snooker	1	0	1
Collecting skulls	1	0	1
Basketball	1	0	1
Skating	0	1	1
Collecting key rings	0	1	1
Collecting models of dogs	0	1	1
First Aid	0	1	1
Collecting foreign dolls	0	1	1
Listening to music	0	1	1
Singing	0	1	1
Netball	0	1	1
Going to the Library	0	1	1
Cinema	0	1	1
Flower pressing	0	1	1
Stamp collecting	0	1	1
Playing out	0	1	1
Totals	**33**	**35**	**68**

Table 6.41. Whether students have computers at home

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	10	10	20
No	2	4	6
Yes, three	1	0	1
Used to have	1	1	2
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.42. What students like to watch on TV

Programme	Boys	Girls	Total
'Neighbours'	3	10	13
'Top of the Pops'	2	2	4
'Eastenders'	0	3	3
Soaps	1	2	3
Films	2	1	3
Cartoons	0	2	2
Series	1	0	1
Game shows	1	0	1
Murder Mysteries	1	0	1
Learning programmes	1	0	1
'The Bill	1	0	1
'L A Law'	1	0	1
'Murder, She Wrote'	1	0	1
'Bread'	1	0	1
'Howard's Way'	1	0	1
Horror	1	0	1
Norman Wisdom films	1	0	1
'Spitting Image'	1	0	1
Olympics	1	0	1

News	0	1	1
Yes	0	1	1
'Casualty'	0	1	1
Lenny Henry	0	1	1
'Mork and Mindy'	0	1	1
Children's BBC	0	1	1
'Sorry'	0	1	1
Open University	0	1	1
'Brookside'	0	1	1
'TV AM'	0	1	1
'Beyond 2000'	0	1	1
Totals	**21**	**31**	**52**

Table 6.43. The kinds of music students like

Music	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Pop/Top 40	7	13	20
Rap/Hip Hop	5	0	5
Michael Jackson	2	0	2
None	2	0	2
Dire Straits	1	0	1
Heavy Metal	1	0	1
Rock	1	0	1
Any kind apart from Opera and Heavy Metal	1	0	1
Bros	0	1	1
Wet Wet Wet	0	1	1
Kylie Minogue	0	1	1
Any except Classical	0	1	1
John Lennon	0	1	1
Totals	**20**	**18**	**38**

Table 6.44. Frequency of students' visits to the cinema

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Not very often	2	4	6
Once every 2 weeks	2	2	4
Every month	2	1	3
Once a week	2	1	3
Once a year	2	0	2
'I don't'	0	2	2
Don't know	1	0	1
Every 2 months	1	0	1
7 times a year	1	0	1
'Whenever I can'	1	0	1
4 times a year	0	1	1
'Whenever there is something good on'	0	1	1
Once every 3 months	0	1	1
Every 1-6 months	0	1	1
'I have been twice'	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.45. The last film students saw

Title	Boys	Girls	Total
'Crocodile Dundee 2'	1	4	5
'Police Academy 5'	3	0	3
Don't know/blank/can't/remember	2	1	3
'Big Business'	1	1	2
'Jungle Book'	1	1	2
'Mannequin'	0	2	2
'Crocodile Dundee 1'	1	0	1
'Bigfoot and the Hendersons'	1	0	1
'Dragnet'	1	0	1

'American Werewolf in London'	1	0	1
'Police Academy 4'	1	0	1
'Police Academy'	1	0	1
'La Bamba'	0	1	1
About a man and a boy changing places	0	1	1
'Masters of the Universe'	0	1	1
'Teenwolf 2'	0	1	1
'Girls Just Want to Have Fun'	0	1	1
'Three Men and a Baby'	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.46. Students' favourite films

Film	Boys	Girls	Total
Police Academies	4	0	4
'Inner Space'	2	0	2
'Crocodile Dundee 2'	0	2	2
'Crocodile Dundee 1'	1	0	1
'Golden Child'	1	0	1
'Thrasher'	1	0	1
'Jungle Book'	1	0	1
'Creepshow'	1	0	1
'Trail of the Lonesome Pine'	1	0	1
'They were all good'	1	0	1
'Back to the Future'	0	1	1
'Haven't got one'	0	1	1
'Lassie'	0	1	1
'Bigfoot and the Hendersons'	0	1	1
Carry On films	0	1	1
'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom'	0	1	1
'Beverly Hills Cop 2'	0	1	1

'Girls Just Want to Have Fun'	0	1	1
'Police Academy 6'	0	1	1
'The Canterville Ghost'	0	1	1
'The Boy who Could Fly'	0	1	1
'Top Gun'	0	1	1
'Crocodile Dundee'	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.47. Whether students watch videos

Answer	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Yes	11	6	17
Sometimes	0	5	5
No	3	2	5
'No video now'	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.48. What kind of videos students like

Kind	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Comedy	4	4	8
Horror	2	3	5
Blank	1	3	4
Violence	3	0	3
Action	2	0	2
All Sorts	2	0	2
Adventure	0	2	2
Fiction	1	0	1
'Don't have a video'	1	0	1
Skateboarding	1	0	1

Murder	1	0	1
None	1	0	1
Scary	0	1	1
Sad	0	1	1
'Anything but horror'	0	1	1
Ghost	0	1	1
War/Navy/Nasa	0	1	1
Totals	**19**	**17**	**36**

Table 6.49. Student's favourite video

Video	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Blank	2	2	4
'Bigfoot and the Hendersons'	2	1	3
'Haven't got one'	2	0	2
'Over the Top'	2	0	2
'Crocodile Dundee 1'	1	0	1
'Thrasher'	1	0	1
'Dragnet'	1	0	1
Camondo [sic] (='Commando')	1	0	1
'Rambo'	1	0	1
'Spaceballs'	1	0	1
'Nightmare on Elm Street 3'	0	1	1
'Girls just want to have Fun'	0	1	1
'Breakdance 2'	0	1	1
Don't Know	0	1	1
'Man, Woman and Child'	0	1	1
'Dirty Dancing'	0	1	1
'Police Academy 3'	0	1	1
Axsasis (?)	0	1	1

'Jumping Jack Flash'	0	1	1
'Police Academy 2'	0	1	1
'Top Gun'	0	1	1
'Jewel on the Nile'	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.50. Whether students like badges or labels on their clothes

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	4	8	12
No	7	3	10
Sometimes	1	2	3
(Illegible)	1	1	2
'Badges and labels'	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.51. Students' opinions on why people should learn to read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Helps generally in life	4	5	9
Helps to get a job	5	4	9
Helps in work	1	6	7
For a good education	3	0	3
To communicate	1	1	2
Helps with vocabulary	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**15**	**17**	**32**

Table 6.52. Whether students would learn to read and write if given the choice

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	13	14	27
Probably	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.53. Students' opinion on whether everyone should be able to read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes/I think so	13	14	27
Yes/no/maybe	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.54. Students' opinion on what will happen when the whole world can read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
No unemployment/better jobs	2	5	7
Happiness/better world	2	3	5
Nothing will happen	0	4	4
More educated people	3	0	3
Don't know	2	1	3
It would be easier	2	0	2
More unemployment	2	0	2
People will read and write for magazines	0	1	1
More people in the political world	0	1	1
Not so many lessons in school	0	1	1
It will start to find other things to learn	1	0	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**15**	**16**	**31**

Table 6.55. Students' estimates of how good they are at reading and writing

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Pretty/quite/fairly good	5	6	11
Average/OK	3	4	7
Reading good/writing bad	1	1	2
Good	2	0	2
Not very good	2	0	2
Good at reading, average/OK at writing	0	2	2
Pretty good at reading/average at writing	0	2	2
Better than average	1	0	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.56. How much better students would like to be at reading and writing

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
A bit	3	6	9
Much	2	4	6
A lot	5	1	6
'Don't want to be much better'	2	1	3
As much as possible	2	0	2
Good	0	2	2
Improve writing	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.57. How students think reading and writing will help them at school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
'If I couldn't read and write I wouldn't be able to do any work here'/helps with work	2	4	6
Exams	2	4	6
Library/English/Maths/Language	1	2	3
Yes I do	1	1	2
Helps a lot	1	1	2
Get a better job	2	0	2
Good/very well	1	1	2
Do better in lessons	0	2	2
Homework	1	0	1
Read a lot more	1	0	1
Neatness and punctuation	1	0	1
Don't know	1	0	1
Write faster (eg take notes)	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**17**	**31**

Table 6.58. Students' opinions on how literacy differs from middle school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Not different	6	2	8
Not very different	2	2	4
A bit harder	0	3	3
A lot better	2	0	2
'You use it in different ways'	2	0	2
Blank	0	2	2
Treated like adults not kids	1	0	1
Reading harder/need to write quicker	1	0	1
Writing longer and different/reading harder and longer books	0	1	1
Reading harder (longer words), writing not hard	0	1	1
Bit harder and more mature	0	1	1
'You don't have to be neat all the time'	0	1	1
Don't read as much, writing is the same	0	1	1
Need to write neater	0	1	1
More advanced	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**16**	**30**

Table 6.59. What students would like to read that they haven't yet

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Blank	3	4	7
Don't know	3	2	5
Don't/none/nothing	3	0	3
Truck magazine October edition	1	0	1
'The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak'	1	0	1
Asterix books	1	0	1
'The Dark'	1	0	1
'Domain'	1	0	1
'Trading Places'	0	1	1
'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole'	0	1	1
More Enid Blyton books	0	1	1
'Moonwalk'	0	1	1
'The Child in the Forest'	0	1	1
Can't remember	0	1	1
'Follow that Boy'	0	1	1
Science books	0	1	1
'Forever'	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.60. Whether students would like to read anything in the future that is too difficult now

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
No/not really	10	7	17
Blank	4	3	7
A book on whippets	0	1	1
'It's not difficult it's hard to understand'	0	1	1
Book by Dickens	0	1	1
'Lord of the Rings'	0	1	1
Science Books	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**15**	**29**

Table 6.61. How students think literacy will help when they leave school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
To get a job	7	7	14
In work	3	5	8
For a good education	2	0	2
Blank	1	1	2
In many ways	1	0	1
Probably	0	1	1
A lot	0	1	1
Don't know	0	1	1
Totals	**14**	**16**	**30**

Appendix I
The Second Research Questionnaire

1. Where you live
2. How long have you lived in Milton Keynes?
3. Do you know where your parents or grandparents were born?
4. What do(es) your parent(s) or guardian do?
5. How did you learn how to read and write?
6. How good are you at reading and writing?
7. How much better would you like to be?
8. How do you think reading and writing have helped you at this school?
9. How have reading and writing affected your decision in your options?
10. How does reading and writing help in your life outside school?
11. Which newspapers does your family get?
12. Which newspapers/magazines etc do you read?
13. What is your favourite book?
14. Is there another one almost as good?
15. What would you like to read that you haven't yet?
16. Is there something too difficult to read at the moment that you'd like to read one day?
17. List here some details about other things you do outside school, and, if possible, whether reading and writing help you do them. For example, music, radio, TV, video, computers, films, clothes or other hobbies.
18. How do you think you will use reading and writing when you leave school?
19. Why do you think people should learn to read and write?
20. Would you if you had the choice?
21. Should everybody be able to read and write?
22. What will happen when the whole world can read and write?

Appendix J
Results of the second research questionnaire

Table 6.62. Where students live

Area	**Number**
Estates	15
Old Towns	8
Villages	2
Totals	**25**

Table 6.63. How long students have lived in Milton Keynes

Time	**Number**
10 years or more	11
5 years or more	4
'All my life'	4
Less than 5 years	5
Yes	1
Totals	**25**

Table 6.64. Whether students know where their parents and grandparents were born.

Answer	Number
Yes	13
London	4
No	2
Consett	1
Africa	1
Beaconsfield	1
Norfolk	1
Edinburgh	1
Blank	1
Totals	**25**

Table 6.65. What parents/guardians do

Answer	Number
Work	11
Mother	
Housewife	3
Cleaner	2
Teacher	2
Display Designer	1
Barmaid	1
Runs Day Nursery	1
Nurse	1
Waitress	1
Clothes Packer	1
Stocker	1
Father	
Racing Mechanic	1

Photocopier Engineer	1
Community Transport Driver	1
Bricklayer/Plasterer	1
Heat Scientist	1
Engineer	1
Doctor	1
Security Guard	1
Painter	1
Die Caster	1
Not living at home	1
Butcher	1
Printer	1
Totals	**38**

Table 6.66. How students learned to read and write

Answer	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
School	10	11	21
Home and School	2	0	2
Playschool	0	1	1
Parents	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.67. How literacy helps students in their life outside school

How	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
A lot/OK/normal (etc)	8	8	16
Personal reading	2	2	4

Writing letters and notes	1	0	1
Reading and writing postcards and letters	1	0	1
Finding a job	0	1	1
Writing diary	0	1	1
Not much	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.68. Newspapers got by students' families

Paper	Number
'Mirror'*	9
Sun	8
Star	2
Express	2
Mail	2
None	2
Times	1
Independent	1
Telegraph	1
Today	1
Sunday Mirror	1
Mail on Sunday	1
Post	1
News of the World	1
Citizen	1
Blank	1
Total	**35**

* (No indication if this is 'Daily Mirror' or 'MK Mirror')

Table 6.69. Newspapers and magazines read by student

Publication	Boys	Girls	Total
Sun	3	3	6
Smash Hits	0	5	5
My Guy	0	5	5
Just 17	0	4	4
Your Sinclair	3	0	3
Crash	3	0	3
'Mirror'*	1	1	2
Blank	2	0	2
Oink	0	0	1
Beano	1	0	1
Beezer	1	0	1
Dandy	1	0	1
The One	1	0	1
Batman DC Comics	1	0	1
2000 AD	1	0	1
Star	1	0	1
News of the World	1	0	1
Sunday Magazine	1	0	1
Daily Mirror	1	0	1
PWI	0	1	1
Sunday Mirror	0	1	1
Quest	1	0	1
Cars	1	0	1
Computer Mags	1	0	1
Hi	0	1	1
Bunty	0	1	1
Girl	0	1	1

Others	0	1	1
'All kinds'	0	1	1
None	1	0	1
Totals	**26**	**25**	**52**

* (No indication if this is 'Daily Mirror' or 'MK Mirror')

Table 6.70. Students' favourite books

Book	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
'Flowers in the Attic'	0	3	3
'Don't have one'	0	2	2
'Don't know one'	0	2	2
'Dungeons and Dragons return to Brookmere'	1	0	1
I like them all	1	0	1
Animals	1	0	1
'The Travels of YS'	1	0	1
'Alfred Hitchcock'	1	0	1
'Secret Dairy of Adrian Mole'	1	0	1
'2010' (Asimov)	1	0	1
'All time Greats of Boxing'	1	0	1
'Robot Commando' (Fighting Fantasy)	1	0	1
What Car	1	0	1
'Lord of the Rings'	1	0	1
'Landings'	1	0	1
'Malay Towers'	0	1	1
A Joke Book	0	1	1
'Moonwalk'	0	1	1
'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe'	0	1	1
'Forever'	0	1	1
Totals	**12**	**12**	**24**

Table 6.71. Whether there is a book almost as good

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
No	4	4	8
'Forever'	0	2	2
'Petals in the Wind'	0	2	2
Yes	1	0	1
'No way'	1	0	1
Probably	1	0	1
'Man and Woman'	1	0	1
'2010' Asimov	1	0	1
Encyclopaedia of Boxing	1	0	1
'The Troll Tooth Wars'	1	0	1
'Growing Pains of Adrian Mole'	1	0	1
'Haunting'	1	0	1
Asterix	0	1	1
'Kidnapped'	0	1	1
'Flowers in the Attic'	0	1	1
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.72. Students' hobbies and interests

Item	Boys	Girls	Total
TV	6	11	17
Music/tapes	3	10	13
Computers	8	5	13
Cinema/films	3	8	11
Videos	4	4	8
Shopping	0	5	5
Football	1	3	4
Books/reading	2	2	4

Clothes	2	1	3
Sports	3	0	3
Going out with friends	0	3	3
Swimming	0	3	3
Cycling	1	1	2
Dungeons and Dragons	1	0	1
Karate	1	0	1
Knives	1	0	1
Tiger pictures	1	0	1
Earrings	1	0	1
Girls	1	0	1
Fishing	1	0	1
Fighting Fantasy books	1	0	1
Modelling	1	0	1
Eating	0	1	1
Discos	0	1	1
Piano	0	1	1
Homework	0	1	1
Dancing	0	1	1
Life-saving	0	1	1
Radio	0	1	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**43**	**63**	**106**

Table 6.73. Why students think people should learn to read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Needed in today's world	6	6	12
Jobs and money	4	3	7
Communicate/remember/understand	1	1	2
To be intelligent	0	1	1
Yes	2	0	2
Blank	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.74. Whether students would learn to read and write if they had the choice

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	12	10	22
No	1	2	3
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.75. Whether students think everybody should be able to read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	9	11	20
No	2	0	2
If possible	1	0	1
If they want	1	0	1
Should try	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.76. What students think will happen if the whole world can read and write

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Something new or miraculous	5	3	8
People more intelligent/educated I	4	5	
More/better jobs	0	3	3
Nothing/not a lot	2	0	2
It won't happen	1	1	2
Blank	0	2	2
Don't know	1	0	1
The end of the world	1	0	1
We will be thick	1	0	1
Depends on the language you write in	1	0	1
People will learn by their mistakes	0	1	1
End of fighting	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**15**	**28**

Table 6.77. How good students think they are at reading and writing

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
Good	5	2	7
Average to good	1	1	2
Average	6	8	14
Reading better than writing	1	1	2
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.78. How much better students would like to be at reading and writing

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
A lot	5	3	8
A bit	3	3	6
Not much	3	2	5
Neater writing	1	2	3
Wouldn't	0	2	2
Don't know	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.79. How students think reading and writing have helped at school

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
A lot	4	9	13
In lessons/work	5	2	7
Not much	1	1	2
To get good marks/high sets	2	0	2
To communicate	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.80. How literacy helped option choices

Answer	Boys	Girls	Total
It hasn't	6	5	11
Could read/fill in options booklet	3	0	3
Not much	2	1	3
A lot - you need to read and write	0	2	2
A lot	0	2	2
(Illegible)	1	0	1
If reading and writing didn't exist			
school wouldn't	1	0	1
To get a job	0	1	1
Future subjects need reading ability	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.81. What students would like to read that they haven't yet

Book	Boys	Girls	Total
Blank	3	2	5
Nothing/none	2	2	4
'Flowers in the Attic'	0	2	2
Don't know	0	2	2
'2061'	1	0	1
'A survey which you don't need an			
A level to read	1	0	1
A lot of books	1	0	1
'The Hobbit'	1	0	1
'The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole'	1	0	1
Boxing Handbook 1989	1	0	1
Finish 'Lord of the Rings'	1	0	1
'Die Hard'	1	0	1

'Petals in the Wind'	0	1	1
'If There be Thorns'	0	1	1
'My Sweet Audrina'	0	1	1
All Judy Blume	0	1	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.82. Whether there is something too difficult at present which students would like to read one day

Answer	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
No	9	10	19
Yes	1	2	3
Don't know	1	0	1
Encyclopaedia	1	0	1
Blank	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Table 6.83. How students intend to use literacy when they leave school

Answer	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
In a job	4	4	8
In everything/when needed	1	5	6
Find a job	3	2	5
Read notices/instructions/write letters	1	1	2
'I want to be a writer'	1	0	1
'Did you?'	1	0	1
Understand things	1	0	1
Yes	1	0	1
Totals	**13**	**12**	**25**

Appendix K
Analysis of Reading Diaries

Table 6.84. Byron's Reading

Item	Mentions in Diary
Newspaper	5
Fishing magazines	3
Football magazines	1
Comic	1
Car magazine	1
Computer screen (game)	1
Recipe (for cooking)	1
Paragraph (of French)	1
Maths Book	1
Total	**15**

Table 6.85. Jonathan's Reading

Item	Mentions in Diary
Product labels	20
Books	17
Magazines	15
Trip	13
School	9
Media	9
Machinery	2
Bank booklet	1
Board games	1
Total	**87**

Table 6.86. Sarah C's Reading

Item	Mentions in Diary
Newspapers	2
Books	2
School related	1
Totals	**5**

Table 6.87. Comparison of Reading Diaries

Kind of reading/writing	Mentions by Boys	by Girls	Total
School reading	3	41	44
School writing	2	52	54
School reading/writing	9	0	9
Home reading:			
Magazines	9	1	10
Newspapers	4	2	6
Books	7	7	14
Product labels	7	0	7
Media	2	0	2
Comic	1	0	1
Computer games	1	0	1
Bank Account booklet	1	0	1
Machinery	1	0	1
Nursing exam preparation	0	1	1
This diary	0	1	1
Name	0	1	1
Exam results (nursing)	0	1	1
Arabic	0	1	1
Book titles	0	1	1
Posters	0	1	1
Home reading/writing:			

Homework	10	10	20
Homework Diary	0	1	1
Home Writing:			
This diary	0	6	6
Exam	0	1	1
Birthday Cards	0	2	2
Totals	**57**	**130**	**187**

Table 6.88. Comparison of reading and writing in Reading Diaries

Kind of reading/writing	Mentions by Boys	by Girls	Total
School writing	2	52	54
Home reading	33	17	50
School reading	3	41	44
Home reading/writing	10	11	21
School reading/writing	9	0	9
Home reading/writing	0	9	9
Totals	**57**	**130**	**187**

Appendix L
Summary of the competences in the Reading Diaries

Note: Everything is reading only unless otherwise stated

I. Home Competences

A Print	Boys	Girls	Shared
	Fishing magazines	Arabic	newspapers
	Football magazines	Birthday card (written)	books
	Comics	posters	TV magazines
	Car magazines	nursing exam and results	
	Cycling magazines	revision for exam	
	Athletics magazines		
	Product labels		
	Board Game Rules		
	Gas Dial		
	Road signs		
	Map		
	Leaflet		
	Souvenirs		
	Shop names/signs		
	Menus		
	Bank Account information		

B Electronic	Boys
	Computer screen (game)
	Ceefax
	TV subtitles
	Radio dial
	Cassette

2. School Competences

Boys

- Read recipe and ingredients
- Read paragraph (in French book)
- Notice Board
- Revision
- Letter
- Sports results and timetable
- HE folder
- Swimming rules
- Labels round room

Girls

- Read/write test (eg spelling)
- Read/write family tree
- Write RE dialogue
- Write spellings and meanings
- Read/write sums
- Writing about something eg maps and scales
- Write sentences
- Read work through
- Write name
- Read/write in homework diary
- Write in exercise books (different subjects)
- Read blackboard
- Read own writing
- Read/write on sponsor sheets
- Official letter home (headlice)
- Cue card, exercises, names and ages French
- Graphs
- Numbers
- Experiment results (Science)

Shared

- Write diary (English)
- Write story
- Read/write/make notes in rough book
- Read/copy from text book
- Read/write homework
- Subject (e.g. 'Maths')
- Read/write/copy from sheets
- Read references books e.g. dictionary
- Write French words and phrases in vocab book
- Read poem
- Reading book
- Read/write this diary
- Read Bible
- Read/write profiles

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